

KNOX, WILLIAM

DRAWER 28

POETS

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Lincoln Poetry

Poets

William Knox

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

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"You may take your oath of that, my dear, I respect a lady's secret a great deal too much for that. No; I was only saying that he was down at the cottage last night, to prove that he and I are friends, and it's not out of any prejudice I'm speaking—about his being a Protestant, and all that; not but that I'd sooner be marrying you to a good Catholic, Feemy—but that's neither here nor there. But you've known him now a long time; it's now four months since, we all heard for certain it was to be a match; and, to tell you the truth, my dear, people are saying that Captain Ussher doesn't mean anything serious."

"I think they'll drive me mad with their talk! And what good will it do for you and Thady to be coming telling me what they say?"

"This good, Feemy; if what they say is false and unfounded, and I'm sure I hope it is, and if you're so fond of Captain Ussher, don't you think it would be as well to put an end to the report by telling your father and brother of your being engaged, and settling something about your marriage, and all that?"

"I did tell my brother I was engaged, Father John; what would you have?"

"I'll tell you what I'd have. I'd have Captain Ussher ask your father or brother's consent; there's no doubt, we all know, but he'd get it; but it's customary, and, in my mind, it would only be decent."

"So he will, I dare say; but mayn't there be reasons why he don't wish to have it talked about yet?"

"Then, Feemy, in your situation, do you think a long clandestine engagement is quite the thing for you; it is quite prudent?"

"And how can it be clandestine, Father John, when you and Thady, and every one else almost, knows all about it?"

"Feemy's sharpness was too much for Father John, so he had to put it on another tack.

"Well, Feemy, now just look at the matter this way, one moment: supposing now—only just for supposition—this lover of yours was not the sort of man we all take him to be, and that he was to turn out false, or inconsistent; suppose now it turned out he had another wife somewhere else—"

"Oh, that's nonsense, you know, Father John."

"Yes, but just supposing it, or that he took some vagrancy into his head, and changed his mind! You must have heard of men doing such things, and why shouldn't your lover as well as another girl's? We're all likely to be deceived in people, and why mayn't we be as well deceived in Captain Ussher, as others have been in those they loved as well? We'll all hope, and think, and believe it's not so; but isn't it as well to be on the safe side, particularly in so important a thing as your happiness, Feemy? You wouldn't like it to be said through the country that you'd been filted by the handsome captain, and that you'd been thrown off by your lover as soon as he was tired of you?"

"And that's thrice for you, Father John; but Myles isn't tired of me, else why should he be coming up here to see me oftener than ever?"

"But it's that he never may be tired of you, Feemy; take my word for it, he'll respect you a great deal more if you'll show more respect to yourself."

"Well, Father John, and what is it you'd have me be doing?"

"Why, then, I'd just ask him to speak a word to Thady—just to propose himself in the regular way."

"But Thady hates him so."

"No, Thady don't hate him; he's only jealous lest Captain Ussher isn't treating you quite as he ought to do."

"But Thady is so queer in his manners; and I know Myles wouldn't like to be asking leave and permission to be courting me."

"But, Feemy, he must like it; and you shouldn't like your lover too more for thinking so little of your brother, or, for the matter of that, of yourself either."

"You know, Father John, I can't help what he thinks of Thady. As to his thinking of me, I'm quite satisfied with that, and I suppose that's enough."

"Father John was beginning to wax wroth, partly because he was displeased with Feemy herself, and partly because Feemy answered him too knowingly."

"Well, then, Feemy, it'll be one of the two; either Captain Ussher will have to speak to Thady, and settle something about the marriage in a proper and decent way; or else Thady will be speaking to him. And now, which do you think will be the best?"

"It's not like you, Father John, to be making Thady quarrel with Captain Ussher. You know it'd come to a quarrel if Thady was to be speaking to Myles that way; and he would never think of doing so as you didn't be putting him up to it."

"And that's little like you, Feemy, to be saying that to your priest; telling me I put the young men up to be quarrelling; it's to save you many a heart-ache, and many a sting of sorrow and remorse; it's to prevent all the evil of unlawful love—bad blood and false looks—that I've come here on a most disagreeable and thankless errand; and now you tell me I'd be

Feemy had, by this time, become sullen, but she didn't dare go farther with her priest.

"I didn't say you'd be making them fight, Father John. I only said if you told Thady not to be meddling with Myles, why, in course, they wouldn't be quarrelling."

"And how could I tell a brother not to meddle with his sister's honor, and reputation and happiness? If you don't think my advice on such a subject likely to be good—and very likely it isn't, for you see I never had a lover of my own—what do you say to your friend, Mrs. McKeon about it? Or, if you like, I'll speak to her; and then, perhaps, you won't be against taking her advice on the subject. Supposing, now, she was to speak to Captain Ussher—from herself, you know, as your friend—do you think he'd love the girl that's to be his wife worse for having a friend that was willing to stand in the place of a mother to her, when she'd none of her own?"

"Why, I do think it would look odd, Mrs. McKeon meddling with it."

"Well, then, Feemy, what in the blessed name do you mean to do, if you won't let any of your friends act for you? I think you must be very much afraid of this lover of yours, when you won't allow any one to speak to him about you. Are you afraid of him, Feemy?"

"Afraid of him? no, of course I'm not afraid of him; but men don't like to be bothered about such things."

"That's very true; men, when they're false, and try to deceive young girls, and are playing their own wicked game with them, do not like to be bothered about such things. But I never heard of an honest man, who really wanted to marry a young woman, being bothered by her friends' consent. And you think, then, things should go on just as they are?"

"Now, Father John, only you've been scolding me so much, I'd have told you before. I mane to spake to Myles myself to-night, just to arrange things; and then I won't have Mrs. McKeon coddling over me that she made up the match."

"There's little danger of that kind, I fear, Feemy, nor would she be doing so; but if you are actually going to speak to Captain Ussher yourself to-night, I'll say no more about it now; but I hope you'll tell Thady to-morrow what passes."

"Oh, Father John, I won't promise that."

"Will you tell me, then, or Mrs. McKeon?"

"Oh, perhaps I'll be telling you, you know, when I come down to confession at Christmas; but indeed I shan't be telling Mrs. McKeon anything about it, to go talking over the country."

"Then, Feemy, I may as well tell you at once—if you will not trust to me, to your brother, or any friend who may be able to protect you from insult, nor prevail on your lover to come forward in a decent and respectable way, and avow his purpose, it will become your brother's duty to tell him that his visits can no longer be allowed at Ballycloran."

"Ballycloran doesn't belong to Thady, and he can't tell him not to come."

"That's not well said of you, Feemy; for you know your father is not capable of interfering in this business; but if, as under those circumstances he will do, Thady quietly and firmly desires Captain Ussher to stay away from Ballycloran, I think he'll not venture to come here. If he does, there are those who will still interfere to prevent him."

"And among you all, that you are so set up against him he's not one of your own set, you drive him out of Ballycloran, I can tell you I'll not remain in it!"

"Then your sins and your sorrows must be on your own head!"

And without saying anything further, Father John took his hat, and walked off. Feemy snatched her novel into her lap, to show how little what was said impressed her, and resumed her attitude over the fire. But she didn't read, her spirit was stubborn and wouldn't bend, but her reason and her conscience were troubled by what the priest had said to her, and the bitter thought for the first time came over her, that her lover, perhaps was not so true to her, as she was to him. There she sat, sorrowfully musing; and though she did not repent of what she thought her own firmness, she was bitterly tormented by the doubts with which her brother, Mary Brady, and the priest, had gradually disturbed her happiness.

She loved Ussher as well as ever—yes, almost more than ever, as the idea that she might perhaps lose him came across her—but she began to be discontented with herself, and to think that she had not played her part as well as she might. In fact, she felt herself to be miserable, and, for the time, hated her brother and Father John for having made her so.

Father John walked sorrowfully back to his cottage, thinking Miss Feemy the most stiff-necked young lady it had ever been his hard lot to meet.

[To be continued.]

Common Sense vs. Poetry. —A line in one of Moore's songs reads thus: "Our couch shall be roses bespangled with dew." To which a sensible girl, according to Landor, replied: "I would give me the rheumatism, so it would

A PRESIDENTIAL POET.

It is seldom that we find a great ruler of a people, a poet. Potentates are usually matter of fact men, and are more inclined to prose than poetry. It is true that James the Fifth of Scotland, and Frederick the Great, of Prussia, did occasionally dally with the Muse of verse. In later times, old Louis of Bavaria indited love sonnets to Lola Montez, and our own excellent "old man eloquent," John Quincy Adams, was somewhat famous for his off-hand contributions to ladies' albums. Below we give an effusion from the pen of President Lincoln, which he contributed several years ago, (before he dreamed of being the ruler of a great nation) to an Illinois paper. A nice critic may detect a few faults in rhyme and rhythm, but as a whole, the production is worthy of a practiced poet. The last two verses are very expressive.

OH! WHY SHOULD THE SPIRIT OF MORTAL BE PROUD?

BY ABRAHAM LINCOLN, ESQ.

Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around and together be laid;
As the young and the old, the low and the high,
Shall crumble to dust, and together shall lie.

The infant a mother attended and loved:
The mother that infant's affection who proved;
The father, that mother and infant who blest—
Each, all are away to that dwelling of rest.

The maid, on whose brow, on whose cheek, in whose eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure—her triumphs are by;
And alike from the minds of the living erased,
Are the memories of mortals that loved her and praised.

The hand of the king that the sceptre hath borne;
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn;
The eye of the sage, and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.

The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to reap;
The herdman, who climbed with his goats up the steep;
The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread,
Have faded away like the grass which we tread.

So the multitude goes, like the flower of the wood,
That withers away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same our fathers have been;
We see the same sights they often have seen;
We drink the same stream, we see the same sun,
And run the same course our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking, our fathers did think;
From the death we are shrinking, our fathers did shrink;
To the life we are clinging, our fathers did cling;
But it speeds from us all like the bird on the wing.

They loved—but the story we cannot unfold;
They scorned—but the heart of the haughty is cold;
They grieved—but no wall from their chambers will come;
They joyed—but the tongue of their gladness is dumb.

They died; ah! they died. We things that are now;
That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
And make in their dwelling a transient abode—
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yes, hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
Are mingled together in sunshine and rain;
And the smile and the tear, and the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye, the draught of a breath,
From the bloom of health to the paleness of death—
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud,
Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

THE PEOPLE versus ACTS OF PARLIAMENT.

—At a meeting of the Dublin Corporation, Mr. Alderman Reynolds suggested that an address should be presented to her majesty on the subject of the decline in the population of Ireland. Mr. Curran: "I do not see how an act of parliament is to increase the population." [Laughter.] Mr. Martin: "I think it is answer to that, it ought to be said the remedy lay in the hands of the Irish people themselves."

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GETTING A WEDDING COAT.—Among
the anecdotes, related by Dr. Bushnell
in his sermon at Litchfield, illustrative
of the age of homespun, was this:—

One of the aged divines of that county,
still living, was married during the
revolution, but under singular difficul-
ties. There was an obstacle to the
wedding which seemed insurmount-
able. He had no wedding coat, nor
was wool to be had to make one, and
it was in the dead of winter. Yet all
parties were ready and he was anxious
to be married without delay. At last
the mother of the intended bride dis-
covered the difficulty and promptly

BURNING OF THE WILLOWS.

A TALE OF THE REVOLUTION.

This must be the house; the junction
of the two roads and a break in front,
the banks covered with willows. Or-
der the men to dismount, with the ex-
ception of a couple of patrols on each
road.

The speaker was dressed in a blue
and scarlet uniform of the British light
horse, a corps that was formed after the
landing of the English troops in New
Jersey, as soon as the horses could be
obtained to mount the men. He was
an officer of some rank, evidently, and
his carriage and demeanor were both
laughable and aristocratic in the high-
est degree. And why not? He was
the oldest son of a British earl.

'The house appears to be deserted,'
Colonel Harcourt, said the junior offi-
cer as he dismounted from his horse.

'We will see. This way, half a doz-
en of you,' he said to his men. 'Try
the door yonder. If it is fastened
break it open and report if any one is
inside. If there should be, and they
attempt to escape, shoot them down, but
first give them warning to surrender.'

The men advanced to the door, which
they found to be fastened, and after de-
manding admission to which they re-
ceived no answer, they proceeded to
break it open, which delayed them
sometime, for the door was a strong
oaken one. This done, they entered.

'Do you know the man by sight,'
lieutenant? asked Col. Harcourt, while
the men were ransacking the house.

'No sir, but there is a fellow I pick-
ed up on the road, now in the rear,
that knows him well. He does not ap-
pear to owe him much favor.'

'Order him to the front.'

The countryman had not a very pre-
possessing countenance.

There was a hold surliness and cruel
expression of features extremely dis-
pleasing about him.

'What is your name?' said Col. Har-
court in a quick military manner.

'John Classen.'

'Do you know Peter Van Dyke?'

'Very well.'

'Is this his dwelling?'

'Yes—though since his mother's
death, and his sister's getting married,
it is hard to say where he keeps him-
self.'

'Does he hear the name of being a
great rebel and a dangerous man to
those who favor the King in this neigh-
borhood?'

'Yes, from the Passaic to the Hack-
ensack and thirty miles around. If I'd
had my way he'd been hung long ago,
and his house burned over his head.'

He is the leader of every rebel gang
from the army' and points out the hon-
est farmer's homes who stand by their
King, whose barns they plunder, and
carry away their grain and cattle.'

'Why, you tell a little tattle about
him. Has he ever injured you?'

'Injured me? He and a parcel of
others, these men but were little for-

but for the arrival of a few friendly
neighbors, well armed, when they went
off in double quick time.'

'Does he not venture into New York
sometimes in disguise?' inquired the
Colonel.

'I have so heard it said. He has
been slippery from a boy up and can
disguise himself in any way. He is a
precious scamp, and you will do a fa-
vor to this part of New Jersey if you
hang him as soon as you catch him.'

This conversation had been held near
a stone wall, on the other side of which
was an old garden, but the troubles of
the times had left it uncultivated—the
gooseberry and currant bushes had
grown up rank and untrimmed, while
the briars stretched over the walls, cov-
ering the ground from sight.

Under this cover and within ten feet
of the Col. and Classen, lay crouched
the very man of whom they were talk-
ing. He had barely time to escape
from the house and conceal himself on
the approach of the horsemen, whom he
did not then expect to be within ten
miles of him.

Twice, on hearing the base lies of
Classen he was on the point of rising and
confronting him; but a little reflection
was left, and he thought, that was not
the occasion to place his life in jeop-
ardy, which he certainly would do,
since the party of troops had come ex-
pressly to take him.

'Do you know with any certainty,'
Classen, how long since Peter Van
Dyke was in the neighborhood?'

'I heard that he was seen last night
two miles from here, in a by-path
through the woods, coming towards his
house.'

'This is the information I received,
and I am determined to capture him
sooner or later. If you can point out
his whereabouts or arrest him yourself,
you shall have a reward of fifty guineas.'

Classen was as avaricious and fond of
money as he was wicked. Fifty guineas
was a large sum indeed when gold
was rarely seen.

'I'll catch him, Colonel, before he is
three days older. I know one of his
haunts.'

'Why not lead us there?'

'It would be of no use this time of
day. Besides he may not be there for
a day or two, and I shall have to be
cautious in looking for him.'

'Well, secure him, and fifty guineas
shall be yours.'

Several of the soldiers now came from
the house, and stated that they had
searched the house from top to bottom,
but could find no one, although from
appearance some one had been there
lately.

The Colonel, followed by Classen,
passed on to the house, while the fugi-
tive lay quietly in his concealment.

It was a plain frame house of mid-
dling size, built partly of stone, in the
Old Dutch style, and very comfortable
within. There was but very little fire-

ison of Van Dyke's sister's marriage
as her part.

'Here is a great coat, sir,' said
of the soldiers, 'that we found on
floor of the kitchen, near the back door.
It must have been dropped by some one
in a hurry.'

'Feel if there are any papers in
pockets,' said Col. Harcourt.

'Yes sir, here is a bundle of them.'

The Colonel took the package, looked
at the subscription, broke the seal, a
going to the window commenced re-
flecting to himself, with a countenance
surprise.

'So, so—here is a list of our troops
and their numbers in and about the city.
At Powell's Hook three hundred and
fifty, at Elizabethtown and New
one thousand. Gen. Clinton leaves
for Charlestown with one thousand.

Why, these documents are indeed
importance, who can play the spy
well in our camp? This Van Dyke
a most dangerous man to be abroad.
Men, and you, Classen, search every
hole and see if any more papers can
be found.'

'Very well, we will now leave this
place and return to quarters at Pow-
er's Hook. Hodgeson, place some dry
wood in the middle of the room, and
when give the word, apply the match.'

'What! are you going to burn the
Willows, Colonel?'

'Yes, I will burn down the nest of the
carrion bird. It is well he is not with
in my reach—he should swing for
One such fellow with his secret spy-
ing is more injury to us than a regiment
rebels in open field.'

Little did the British command
imagine that the young man was
most within the very sound of his voice.

'To horse, men, all except Hodgeson
'Now, Hodgeson, apply the match
mount and fall in.'

It was with anguish that Van Dyke
heard this order from his hiding place.
The Willows, as the farm house was
called, had been the birth place of 1
ancestors, as it was his own, and the
he had passed his life. But what could
he do? Nothing.

Presently a thick bright smoke arose
and burst from each door and window.
This was followed by bright flames, that
shot far into the sky, and the crackling
of the well seasoned timbers, dry for
a century of preparation could be heard
at a great distance.

'There will be one rebel shelter left
to-night. It is a pity they were not
burned down, then the king would have
more friends on this side of the water.
These rebels are like dogs, a good whiff
makes them better natured. The house
will be consumed, for the embers
are beginning to fly before the evening
breeze. By file, to the right face, tro
and the horsemen wheeled into the road.

'Fifty guineas you say, Colonel, I
take Van Dyke?' asked Classen again.

'Yes, fifty guineas.'

'Then I will leave you here, and let
a watch around. He may return to

A POEM RECITED BY MR. LINCOLN.

To the Editor of the New York Evening Post:

I have been urged by several friends to send you the enclosed poem, written down by myself from Mr. Lincoln's lips, and although it may not be new to all of your readers; the events of the last week give it now a peculiar interest.

The circumstances under which this copy was written are these: I was with the President alone one evening in his room, during the time I was painting my large picture at the White House, last year. He presently threw aside his pen and papers, and began to talk to me of Shakspeare. He sent little "Tad," his son, to the library to bring a copy of the plays, and then read to me several of his favorite passages, showing genuine appreciation of the great poet. Relapsing into a sadder strain, he laid the book aside, and, leaning back in his chair, said:

"There is a poem which has been a great favorite with me for years, which was first shown to me, when a young man, by a friend, and which I afterward saw and cut from a newspaper and learned by heart. I would," he continued, "give a great deal to know who wrote it, but I have never been able to ascertain."

Then half closing his eyes he repeated to me the lines which I enclose to you. Greatly pleased and interested, I told him I would like, if ever an opportunity occurred, to write them down from his lips. He said he would some time try to give them to me. A few days afterward he asked me to accompany him to the temporary studio of Mr. Swayne, the sculptor, who was making a bust of him at the Treasury Department. While he was sitting for the bust I was suddenly reminded of the poem, and said to him that *then* would be a good time to dictate it to me. He complied, and sitting upon some books at his feet, as nearly as I can remember, I wrote the lines down, one by one, from his lips.

With great regard, very truly yours,
F. B. CARPENTER.

O, WHY SHOULD THE SPIRIT OF MORTAL BE PROUD?

O, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift, fleeing meteor, a fast-flying sword,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around and together be laid,
And the young and the old, and the low and the high
Shall moulder to dust and together shall lie.

The infant a mother attended and loved;
The mother that infant's affection who proved;
The husband that mother and infant who loved,
Each all, are away to their dwellings of rest.

The hand of the king that the sceptre has borne;
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn;
The eye of the sage and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.

The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to reap;
The herdsman, who climbed with his goats up the steep;
The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread,
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

So the multitude goes, like the flower or the weed
That withers away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same our fathers have been;
We see the same sights our fathers have seen—
We drink the same stream and view the same sun,
And run the same course our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers would think;
From the death we are drinking our fathers would shrink;
To the life we are clinging they also would cling;
But it speeds for us all, like a bird on the wing.

They loved, but the story we cannot unfold;
They scorned, but the heart of the haughty is cold,
They grieved, but no wail from their slumber will come;
They joyed, but the tongue of their gladness is dumb.

They died, aye! they died; we think that are now,
That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
And make in their dwellings a transient abode,
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yea! hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
We mingle together in sunshine and rain;
And the smile and the tear, the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death;
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud—
O why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

1865

PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S FAVORITE POEM.

Mr F. B. Carpenter, the well known painter of "The Emancipation Proclamation before the Cabinet," has written a note in reference to a poem much admired by Mr. Lincoln. He says:—

I have been urged by several friends to send you the enclosed poem, written down by myself from Mr. Lincoln's lips, and although it may not be new to all of your readers, the events of the last week give it now a peculiar interest.

The circumstances under which this copy was written are these: I was with the President alone one evening in his room, during the time I was painting my large picture at the White House, last year. He presently threw aside his pen and papers, and began to talk to me of Shakspeare. He sent little "Tad," his son, to the library to bring a copy of the plays, and then read to me several of his favorite passages, showing genuine appreciation of the great poet. Relapsing into a saunter strain, he laid the book aside, and leaning back in his chair, said:—

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Then half closing his eyes, he repeated to me the lines which I enclose to you. Greatly pleased and interested, I told him I would like, if ever an opportunity occurred, to write them down from his lips. A few days afterward he asked me to accompany him to the temporary studio of Mr. Swayne, the sculptor, who was making a bust of him at the Treasury Department. While he was sitting for the bust, I was suddenly reminded of the poem, and said to him that then would be a good time to dictate it to me. He complied, and sitting upon some books at his feet, as nearly as I can remember, I wrote the lines down one by one from his lips.

With great regard, very truly yours,

F. B. CARPENTER.

OH! WHY SHOULD THE SPIRIT OF MORTAL BE PROUD?

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift, fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around and together be laid;
And the young men and the old; and the low
and the high
Shall moulder to dust and together shall lie.

The infant and mother attended and loved;
The mother that in infant's affection who proved;
The husband that mother and infant who
blessed,

Each, all, are away to their dwellings of Rest.

The hand of the king that the sceptre hath
borne;

The brow of the priest that the mitre hath
worn;

The eye of the sage and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.

The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to
reap;

The herdsman, who climbed with his goats up
the steep;

The beggar, who wandered in search of his
bread,

Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

So the multitude goes, like the flower or the
weed

That withers away to let others succeed:
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same our fathers have been;
We see the same sights our fathers have seen;
We drink the same stream and view the same
sun,
Add run the same course our fathers have
run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers
would think;

From the death we are shrinking our fathers
would shrink;

To the life we are clinging, they also would
cling;

But speeds for us all, like a bird on the wing.

They loved, but the story we cannot unfold;

They scorned, but the heart of the haughty is
cold;

They grieved, but no wail from their slumber
will come;

They joyed, but the tongue of their gladness is
dumb.

They died, aye! they died; we things that are
now,

That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
And make in their dwellings a transient abode,
Meet the things that they met on the pilgrim-
age road.

Yea! hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
We mingle together in sunshine and rain;

And the smile and the tear, and the song, and
the dirge,

Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a
breath,

From the blossom of health to the paleness of
death.

From the gilded saloon to the bier and the
shroud.

Oh why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

First appeared in a

New York Paper Apr 20 1865

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Issued monthly,

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➤Oh, Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud?◀

—○—
By William Knox.
—○—

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Prepared Expressly for Supplementary Reading in Schools.
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Address the publisher,

C. M. PARKER, Editor School News,
Taylorville, Ill.

»Oh, Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud?«

BY WILLIAM KNOX.

I.

Oh, why should the spirit* of mortal* be proud*?
Like a swift-fleeting* meteor, a fast-flying* cloud,
A flash* of the Lightning, a break of the wave,
Man passes* from life to his rest* in the grave*.

II.

The leaves* of the oak and the willow shall fade*,
Be scattered* around and together be laid*;
And the young and the old, and the low* and the
high*,
Shall molder* to dust and together shall lie*.

III.

The infant*, a mother attended* and loved,
The mother, that infant's affection* who proved,
The husband, that mother and infant who blessed*,
Each, all, are away to their dwellings* of rest.

IV.

The maid, on whose cheek, on whose brow, in whose
eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure*—her triumphs* are by.

And the memories of those who have loved her and
praised
Are alike from the minds of the living erased*.

V.

The hand of the king that the scepter* hath borne*,
The brow of the priest that the miter* hath worn,
The eye of the sage*, and the heart of the brave*,
Are hidden and lost* in the depth of the grave.

VI.

The peasant*, whose lot was to sow and to reap,
The herdsman, who climbed* with his goats up the
steep*,
The beggar, who wandered* in search* of his bread,
Have faded away like the grass that we tread*.

VII.

The saint*, who enjoyed the communion* of Heaven,
The sinner, who dared* to remain unforgiven,
The wise and the foolish, the guilty* and just,
Have quietly* mingled* their bones in the dust.

VIII.

So the multitude* goes, like the flower or the weed,
That withers* away to let others succeed*;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold*,
To repeat every tale* that has often been told.

IX.

For we are the same that our fathers have been;
We see* the same sights* that our fathers have seen;
We drink the same stream, and we view* the same
sun,
And run* the same course* that our fathers have
run.

X.

The thoughts we are thinking, our fathers would
 think;
 From the death that we shrink* from, our fathers
 would shrink;
 To the life that we cling* to, they also would cling;
 But it speeds* for us all, like a bird on the wing.

XI.

They loved, but the story we can not unfold*;
 They scorned*, but the heart of the haughty* is
 cold:
 They grieved*, but no wail* from their slumbers*
 will come;
 They joyed, but the tongue of their gladness is
 dumb*.

XII.

They died—ah! they died—and we things that are
 now,
 Who walk on the turf* that lies over their brow,
 Who make in their dwelling a transient* abode*,
 Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage-
 road.

XIII.

Yea! hope and despondency*, pleasure and pain,
 We mingle* together in sunshine and rain;
 And the smiles and the tears, the song and the
 dirge*,
 Still follow each other like surge* upon surge.

XIV.

'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught* of a breath,
 From the blossom of health to the paleness* of
 death,
 From the gilded* saloon to the bier* and the shroud:
 Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

→Suggestive Exercises on Above Selection.←

1. Read the poem carefully and thoughtfully.
2. What is the leading thought of the poem?
3. Write a paraphrase of each stanza of the poem.
4. Define or give synonyms for the words marked with stars.
5. Analyze the following derivative words:

1. beggar.	5. quietly.
2. unforgiven.	6. unfold.
3. foolish.	7. gladness
4. guilty.	8. paleness.
6. What is a derivative word?
7. Make a list of the compound words of this selection. What is a compound word?
8. How many verses in each stanza of this poem?
9. Which verses rhyme?
10. Make a list of the imperfect rhymes of this poem.
11. Give the diacritical marking and correct pronunciation of each of the following words:

1. mortal.	4. passes.	7. grass.
2. meteor.	5. erased.	8. haughty.
3. fast.	5. scepter.	9. draught.
12. What figure of speech in the second verse of the first stanza?
13. Make a list of the expressions used by the poet to indicate death.
14. This piece was the favorite with Abraham Lincoln. Compare it with Psalms xc. and ciii.
15. William Knox was a Scottish poet, born about 1788. Among his poems are "The Lonely Hearth" and "Mariamne." He died in 1825.

Pupils' Edition of Illinois State Course of Study.

At the request of County Superintendent Chas. McIntosh, editor-in-chief of the latest edition of the Illinois State Course of Study, and of a number of other County Superintendents who know the value of placing the Course in the hands of pupils, we have published an abridged edition of the Illinois Course containing all the work of Seventh, Eighth, Ninth and Tenth years (pages 119 to 252 of the complete Course) together with a special Preface from the Committee on State Course recommending that the Course be placed in the hands of pupils, two Daily Programs, together with an explanation of the same.

There are many advantages in having the Course of Study in the hands of each pupil above the intermediate grades, and in schools where it is not furnished free by the Superintendent or School Board it will be well for teachers to order a supply for their pupils, letting each pupil pay for a copy.

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C. M. PARKER, Publisher, Taylorville, Ill.

ILLINOIS STATE COURSE OF STUDY.

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2. Two model programs for schools using the Illinois Course, fully illustrating the plan of "alternation."
3. Special outline in Constructive Work for first and second years.
4. Outline in detail in Language for first and second years.
5. Outline in Household Arts combined with the outline in Physiology.
6. Outline in Woodworking for Grammar schools and for High Schools.

In addition to above new features the Course contains complete outlines of all the common school branches, agriculture, drawing, vocal music, morals and manners, etc.

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C. M. PARKER, Publisher, Taylorville, Ill.

Select Rote Songs and Elementary Music Reader.

BY F. W. WESTHOFF,
Instructor in Vocal Music, Illinois State Normal
University, Normal, Illinois.

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The book is in two parts bound together. The songs in Part One form the basis of elementary instruction in music and should be taught by rote. The book contains all the rote songs named in the Third General Revision of the Illinois State Course of Study; also a number of patriotic songs.

The material in Part Two, with reference to its gradation, is especially adapted for use in connection with the outline in vocal music in the Illinois State Course of Study. It is intended that this material be used for study and practice at sight reading. Parts One and Two should be used simultaneously.

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LINCOLN'S FAVORITE.

The Original Verses of "O, Why
Should the Spirit of Mor-
tal Be Proud?"

COPY SIXTY YEARS OLD.

Fishermen in Old Erie Are Be-
coming a Little More Careful
About Placing Their Nets.

Labor Day Sports.

Buffalo News 7-26-96

(Special to the Sunday News.)

Dunkirk, July 25.—Mrs. Betsey Henderson, who lives near Sberiden, N. Y., has in her possession the original verses of Lincoln's favorite poem. The verses were written by William Knox, a young Scotchman, a contemporary of Sir Walter Scott, and appeared in the Louisville, Ky., Evening Post nearly 60 years ago. They were clipped from that paper by Mrs. Henderson's mother, and have ever since been retained by the Henderson family. The poem was a great favorite with Mr. Lincoln, and 'tis said that during the dark days of the rebellion he found much consolation in daily repeating the beautiful lines which he had committed to memory. The leading journals throughout the United States have reprinted extracts from the poem, but so far as known it has never been reproduced in full. By special arrangements, and through the courtesy of Mrs. Henderson, the NEWS today is able to reproduce the poem in full as it appeared in the Evening Post at that time:

So the multitude goes, like the flower or the weed,
That withers away to let others succeed.
So the multitude comes, even those we be-
hold,
To repeat every tale that has often been
told.

For we are the same our fathers have been,
We see the same sights our fathers have
seen;
We drink the same stream, we view the
same sun,
And run the same course our fathers have
run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers
would think,
From the death we are shrinking our fath-
ers would shrink;
To the life we are clinging they also would
cling,
But it speeds from us all like a bird on the
wing.

They loved, but the story we cannot unfold,
They scorned, but the heart of the haughty
is cold;
They grieved, but no wall from their slum-
bers will come;
They joyed, but the tongue of their glad-
ness is dumb.

They died—ay, they died—we things that
are now—
That walk on the turf that lies over their
brow,
And makes in their dwellings a transient
abode,
Meet the things that they meet on their
pilgrimage road.

Yea, hope and despondency, pleasure and
pain,
Are mingled together in sunshine and rain;
The smile and the tear, the song and the
dirge,
Still follow each other like surge upon
surge.

'Tis the wink of our eye, 'tis the draught of
a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness
of death;
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the
shroud,
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be
proud?

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be
proud?
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying
cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the
wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the
grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall
fade,
Be scattered around, and together be laid;
And the young and the old, and the low and
the high,
Shall moulder to dust, and together shall
lie.

The infant a mother attended and loved,
The mother, that infant's affection who
proved;
The husband, that mother and infant who
blest,
Each, all, are away to their dwellings of
rest.

The maid, on whose cheek, on whose brow,
In whose eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure, her triumphs
are by;
And the memory of those who loved her
and praised,
Are alike from the minds of the living
erased.

The heart of the king, that the scepter had
borne,
The brow of the priest, that the miter hath
worn;
The eye of the eagle, and the heart of the
brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the
grave.

The peasant whose lot was to sow and to
reap;
The herdsman, who climbed with his goats
up the steep;
The beggar, who wandered in search of his
bread,
Have faded away, like the grass that we
tread.

The saint who enjoyed the communion of
heaven,
The sinner, who dared to remain unfor-
given;
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and
just,
Have quietly mingled their bones in the
dust.

Bernard Sallsbury, fish and game
protector, is determined to break up the
practice of setting trap nets within un-
lawful limits in Lake Erie. He has a
system in vogue now by which he is
bound to catch the shrewdest and most
cunning violators of the law, and since
the seizure of the nets at Van Buren a
few days ago the fishermen are becom-
ing very cautious as to placing their
nets within the proper limit.

Miss Nellie Timperley entertained a
select party of friends at her home on
Swan street Friday evening in honor of
John W. Whelpton of Elmira.

At a meeting of Citizens' Hose Com-
pany Friday evening it was decided to
join with the Young Men's Association
and give a big celebration at the Driv-
ing Park on Labor Day, to consist of
field sports, including bicycle races,
hose races, foot races, hitching up races
and baseball games.

President Lincoln's Favorite Poem

[The following poem was a particular favorite with Mr. Lincoln. It was first shown him, when a young man, by a friend, and afterwards he cut it from a newspaper and learned it by heart. "I would give a great deal," he once said to a friend, "to know who wrote it, but have never been able to ascertain." Later he learned that the author was William Knox, a Scottish poet who was born in 1789 at Firth and died in Edinburgh in 1825.]

O why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
Man passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around, and together be laid;
As the young and the old, the low and the high,
Shall crumble to dust and together shall lie.

The infant a mother attended and loved,
The mother that infant's affection who proved,
The father that mother and infant who blest—
Each, all, are away to that dwelling of rest.

The maid on whose brow, on whose cheek, in whose eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure—her triumphs are by;
And alike from the minds of the living erased
Are the memories of mortals who loved her and praised.

The head of the King that the scepter hath borne;
The brow of the priest, that the miter hath worn;
The eye of the sage, and the heart of the brave—
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.

The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to reap;
The herdsman, who climbed with his goats up the steep;
The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread—
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

So the multitude goes, like the flower or the weed
That withers away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To reap every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same our fathers have been,
We see the same sights our fathers have seen;
We drink the same stream, we see the same sun,
And run the same course our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers did think;
From the death we are shrinking our fathers did shrink;
To the life we are clinging our fathers did cling,
But it speeds from us all like the bird on the wing.

They loved—but the story we cannot unfold;
They scorned—but the heart of the haughty is cold;
They grieved—but no wail from their slumbers will come;
They joyed—but the tongue of their gladness is dumb.

They died—ah! they died—we, things that are now,
That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
And make in their dwelling a transient abode,
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yes, hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
Are mingled together in sunshine and rain,
And the smile and the tear, and the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye; 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud;
O why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

"Oh why should the
spirit of mortal be
proud?"

Not Swan - Swan
2-12-31

REVEALS POEM LINCOLN LOVED

Chicago Sun 2-12-29
Among the maze of recollections of Lincoln that yesterday brought came one from Professor William E. Jillson of Evanston.

It was a yellowed newspaper clipping from a New York paper of April 20, 1865, shortly after the emancipator was assassinated, and quotes one of his favorite poems.

The donor, F. B. Carpenter, explained that he had copied the poem as Lincoln recited it to him, and since Lincoln was so fond of the verses, he felt that no more fitting commemoration could be printed.

The poem is a well-known one opening:

O why should the spirit of mortal
be proud?
Like a swift fleeing meteor, a fast-
flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break
of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in
the grave.

Professor Jillson, whose scrapbook contained many clippings concerning Abraham Lincoln, explained that his father had been one of the President's close friends.

Lincoln Yearned to Be Able to Write Poem as Fine as Obscure Scotchman's

AN obscure Scottish poet, William Knox, who is not even listed in the encyclopedias, wrote the poem of which Abraham Lincoln said, "I would give all I am worth, and go in debt, to be able to write so fine a piece as I think that is."

The poem, "Mortality," might long ago have been forgotten had it not been a favorite of Lincoln's. Critics have called it a commonplace and pedantic rhyme but Lincoln, according to a friend, would recite its serious lines even on awakening in the morning.

Expressed Futility

Lincoln first saw the poem in a newspaper and committed it to memory. The futility expressed in the verses appealed strongly to him because he was fond of poems expressive of hopelessness, woe and foreboding. Even as a youth he gave an indication of his philosophy when he wrote in his copybook:

"Abraham Lincoln his hand and pen,
He will be good but God knows when."

Lawrence Weldon, when a young lawyer, traveled considerably with Lincoln on political trips. Years afterward he wrote that Lincoln "would frequently lapse into reverie and remain lost in thought long after the rest of us had retired for the night, and more than once I remember waking up early in the morning to find him sitting before the fire, his mind apparently concentrated on some subject, and with the saddest expression I have ever seen in a human being's eyes."

When thus gazing into the dying embers, said Weldon, he would often recite "Mortality."

Recites for Actress

There is a copy of the poem in Lincoln's handwriting in the manuscript collection of Oliver



In such a contemplative mood as this, Lincoln, "gazing into the dying embers," would recite "Mortality," his favorite poem.

R. Barrett, of Chicago.

In 1846 Lincoln sent a poem to Andrew Johnston, a fellow Illinois Whig. It was undoubtedly a copy of "Mortality." When Johnston inquired the author of the poem, Lincoln wrote "I would give all I am worth, and go in debt, to be able to write so fine a piece as I think that is. Neither do I know who is the author. I met it in a straggling form in a newspaper last summer (1845), and I remember to have seen it once before, about 15 years ago, and this is all I know about it."

Several years later he remarked, "I would give a great deal to know who wrote it, but I have never been able to ascertain." Before his death, however, he learned it was written by Knox.

The poem, in part, is as follows:

"Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast flying cloud,
A flash of lightning, a break of the wave,
Man passeth from life to rest in his grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around and together be laid;
And the young and the old, and the low and the high,
Shall moulder to dust and together shall lie.

So the multitude goes, like the flower or the weed
That withers away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same our fathers have been;
We see the same sights our fathers have seen—
We drink the same stream and view the same sun,
And run the same course our fathers have run.

Yea! hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
We mingle together in sunshine and rain;
And the smiles and the tears, the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud—
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?"

FAVORITE POEMS

WILLIAM KNOX, Scottish poet, was born in Firth in 1789 and died in Edinburgh in 1825. His most familiar work, "O, Why Should the Spirit of Mortal Be Proud?", was a particular favorite of Abraham Lincoln,

whose birthday the nation will celebrate next Wednesday. Lincoln clipped it from a newspaper and for some time did not know the name of the author. He learned it later, however.

O, WHY SHOULD THE SPIRIT OF MORTAL BE PROUD?

O, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-flying meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around, and together be laid;
As the young and the old, the low and the high,
Shall crumble to dust and together shall lie.

The infant a mother attended and loved,
The mother that infant's affection who proved,
The father that mother and infant who blest,—
Each, all, are away to that dwelling of rest.

The maid on whose brow, on whose cheek, in whose eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure,—her triumphs are by;
And alike from the minds of the living erased
Are the memories of mortals who loved her and praised.

The head of the king, that the scepter hath borne;
The brow of the priest, that the mitre hath worn;
The eye of the sage, and the heart of the brave,—
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.

The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to reap;
The herdsman, who climbed with his goats up the steep;
The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread,—
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud;
O, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

So the multitude goes, like the flower or weed
That withers away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same our fathers have been;
We see the same sights our fathers have seen;
We drink the same stream, we see the same sun,
And run the same course our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers did think;
From the death we are shrinking our fathers did shrink;
To the life we are clinging our fathers did cling,
But it speeds from us all like the bird on the wing.

They loved,—but the story we cannot unfold;
They scorned,—but the heart of the haughty is cold;
They grieved,—but no wail from their slumbers will come;
They joyed,—but the tongue of their gladness is dumb.

They died,—ah! they died,—we, things that are now,
That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
And make in their dwelling a transient abode,
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yea, hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
Are mingled together in sunshine and rain;
And the smile and the tear, and the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other like surge upon surge.

The Tribune suggests "Favorite Poems" be saved for your scrapbook. Next Sunday—"I Have a Rendezvous with Death," by Alan Seeger.

Knox, William

O Why Should the Spirit of Mortal Be Proud?

"O why should the spirit of mortal be proud?"

KNOX, Wm.

Poem is by Wm Knox. Published anonymously; Lincoln read it at press time.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S

FAVORITE



POEM,

Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift, fleeting meteor, a fast flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.
The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around and together be laid;
And the young and the old, and the low and the high,
Shall moulder to dust and together shall lie.
The infant and mother attended and loved;
The mother that infant's affection who proved,
The husband that mother and infant who blessed,
Each, all, are away to their dwellings of rest.
The hand of the king that the scepter hath borne;
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn;
The eye of the sage and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.
The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to reap;
The herd-maid, who climbed with his goats up the steep;
The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread,
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.
So the multitude goes, like the dower of the weed,
That withers away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.
For we are the same our fathers have been;
We see the same sights our fathers have seen;
We drink the same stream and view the same sun,
And run the same course our fathers have run.
The thoughts we are thinking our fathers would think;
From the death we are shrinking our fathers would shrink;
To the life we are clinging they also would cling;
But it speeds from us all like a bird on the wing.
They loved, but the story we cannot unfold;
They scorned, but the heart of the haughty is cold;
They grieved, but no wail from their slumber will come;
They joyed, but the tongue of their gladness is dumb.
They died; are! they died; we think that are now,
That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
And make in their dwellings a transient abode,
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage road.
Tear! hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
We mingle together in sunshine and rain;
And the smile and the tear, the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.
'Tis the wink of an eye 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossoms of health to the paleness of death;
From the gilded mansion to the bier and the shroud,
Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

A. W. AUBER, SONG PUBLISHER, Cor. 11th & Market, Philada.

Exhibit/ Artifact #	Label #	Description (origin)	Dimensions (h x w x d)	Action
9.3-2/ A2		LINCOLN'S FAVORITE POEM - 'Mortality', William Knox	TBD	

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor.
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Number 417

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

April 5, 1937

"MORTALITY"—LINCOLN'S FAVORITE POEM

Lincoln, on one occasion wrote that he would give all he was worth to be able to compose so fine a poem as "Mortality." He sent a copy of it to an acquaintance by the name of Johnston, who concluded that Lincoln was the author and so indicated in acknowledging the receipt of it. To this suggestion Lincoln re-acted as follows:

Fremont, April 18, 1846.

Friend Johnston:

... I have not your letter now before me; but, from memory, I think you ask me who is the author of the piece I sent you, and that you do so ask as to indicate a slight suspicion that I myself am the author. Beyond all question, I am not the author. I would give all I am worth, and go in debt, to be able to write so fine a piece as I think that is. Neither do I know who is the author. I met it in a straggling form in a newspaper last summer, and I remember to have seen it once before, about fifteen years ago, and this is all I know about it.

Yours truly,

A. Lincoln.

The poem was so often associated with Lincoln, who on many occasions recited it from memory that after he became President it appeared in print throughout the country attributed to him. This aroused Lincoln to the necessity of discovering, if possible, the real author and he appealed to his friends to assist him in this quest. Apparently it was James Grant Wilson, who informed Mr. Lincoln that the author of the poem was William Knox.

William Knox

William Knox was born in Firth, Scotland, on August 17, 1789, oldest son of Thomas and Barbara Turnbull Knox. He had a grammar school education and in early youth began to write poems. One biographer says, "He was short in stature, but handsomely formed, his complexion fair, and his hair of a light color. He was a great favorite in society, possessing an inexhaustable fund of humor, and was an excellent story teller, and repeated and sang his own songs with great beauty." He passed away when he was but thirty-six years of age. On his tombstone in later years, there was engraved the inscription, "The poem entitled "Mortality" by William Knox is engraved in letters of gold on the walls of the Imperial Palace at St. Petersburg. It was, also, the favorite poem of Abraham Lincoln, who repeated verses of it on the day of his assassination."

In Edinburg, Scotland, where Knox died there stands the first heroic bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln erected on foreign soil. It is the work

of Thomas Bissell and was dedicated on August 21, 1893.

Early Editions—1818, 1824, 1825

The first edition of Knox's Poems was published in 1818, under the caption of "The Lonely Hearth and Other Poems." Whether or not this compilation contained "Mortality" we are not advised.

The second edition of his poems was published in 1824, and was called "The Songs of Israel." It was a two volume, 12 mo. edition and contained the famous poem "Mortality."

An edition appeared in 1825, just a year later than the earlier printing under the caption "The Harp of Zion." Whether or not, "Mortality" was reprinted we do not know.

Almanac Copy—1831

It would appear from the letter to Johnston that it was about 1831, when Lincoln first observed the poem. It is said to have been called to his attention by Dr. Jason Duncan of New Salem, Illinois, who discovered it with no authors name attached in an almanac. As far as we know the name of the almanac in which the poem was printed has not been discovered.

Newspaper Copy—1845

It was the year before the correspondence with Johnston, in the summer of 1845, that Lincoln observed a copy of the poem in a newspaper. He said it appeared in "a straggling form." A copy of the poem appeared in The Louisville Evening Post about the time mentioned by Lincoln and it was in "straggling form," starting with the seventh stanza and concluding with the sixth.

Johnstone Edition—1847

The collected poems of Knox were brought together by the publisher, John Johnstone, of London in 1847, under the caption "The Lonely Hearth, The Songs of Israel, Harp of Zion and Other Poems" by William Knox.

Sheet Music—1865

After Lincoln's tragic death the theme of the poem encouraged its use more widely and at least three pieces of sheet music appeared in 1865, containing the words of "Mortality."

The Pearson Copy was published by Oliver Ditson and Company, Boston, under the caption, "Oh Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud, poem by Abraham Lincoln, later President of the United States, music by George C. Pearson."

The Sedgwick copy was entitled "President Lincoln's Favorite Poem" with music by A. Sedgwick. It also gave a brief account of the reciting

of the poem by Lincoln as copied down by Carpenter. It was published by Wm. A. Pond and Company, New York.

The Everest Copy was also called "President Lincoln's Favorite Poem" and stated that it was "copied by F. B. Carpenter while our lamented chief was reciting it." This number was adapted to music by C. Everest and published by Lee and Walker, Philadelphia.

Hours at Home Magazine—1865

One of the earliest monthly magazines to feature the poem was "Hours at Home" for September, 1865, edited by J. M. Sherwood, who evidently wrote the article on "Mr. Lincoln's Favorite Poem, and Its Author." Besides giving an interesting biographical sketch of Knox, it printed the entire fourteen stanzas of the poem.

Humphrey's Illustrated Book—1877

A separately printed brochure bearing the title "Oh Why Should the Spirit of Mortal Be Proud?" was published in 1877, by Lee and Shepard, Boston. The illustrations, one for each stanza were designed by Miss L. B. Humphrey. The name of Lincoln is not mentioned and it is properly credited to William Knox. Other separately printed copies of the poem have since been printed.

The Houser Brochure—1935

The most exhaustive study of Knox's poem "Mortality" as it has become associated with Abraham Lincoln, has appeared in a brochure prepared by M. L. Hauser and was published in 1935, by Edward W. Meredith of Peoria, Illinois. It is entitled "Abraham Lincoln's Favorite Poem, Its Author and His Book." The monograph also appears in "The Lincoln Group Papers" published by The Black Cat Press, Chicago.

The first and last verses of the fourteen stanzas of the immortal poem follow.

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal
be proud?

Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-
flying cloud,

A flash of the lightning, a break of
the wave,

Man passes from life to his rest in the
grave.

'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the
draught of a breath,

From the blossom of health to the
paleness of death,

From the gilded saloon to the bier and
the shroud:

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal
be proud?

Off the Record

By Harry Bloom.

IT MAY HAVE BEEN THE fallibility of human chronicles that inspired Henry Ford to remark that history is bunk. Every now and then we come across examples that make us wonder how far the rest of the record is to be trusted. For example, today's mail brought a bulletin from the Lincoln National Life Foundation dealing with Abraham Lincoln's love of the poem, "Mortality," which opens with the well-known line: "Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" It reprints a letter Lincoln wrote to a friend in 1846, in which he tells of having come across the poem fifteen years before and again "in a straggling form in a newspaper last summer." Apropos of this reference, the bulletin remarks: "A copy of the poem appeared in the Louisville Evening Post about the time mentioned by Lincoln and it was 'in straggling form,' starting with the seventh stanza and concluding with the sixth." If this refers to the Louisville, Ky., Evening Post it is an open and shut error. There was no Evening Post here until thirteen years after Lincoln's assassination. In the 1820s a "Morning Post" was published for a brief period, but it died soon, and it is improbable that it could have been the paper Lincoln mentioned as having read in 1845, unless, of course, his laundry, if any, came home wrapped in an old copy.

THE LOUISVILLE TIMES

APRIL · 12, 1937.

perpetuated by keeping the fires of freedom burning brightly in every American heart despite the darkness of prevailing despotism.

The Late Honorable Caroline O'Day

SPEECH

OF

HON. WILLIAM T. BYRNE

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 6, 1943

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. MERRITT. I yield.

Mr. BYRNE. Mr. Speaker, the passing of Mrs. O'Day is not the end of an epoch, but it is the passing of the beginning of an epoch. Mrs. O'Day represented the womanhood of this country who sought through the original suffragette program equal rights with men in suffrage. The story of her work on the suffrage movement is interesting and is also illustrative of the work of millions of other women in our country who were impelled and inspired by the suffrage movement and the leadership of many other women who had been originally in the movement. Mrs. O'Day, in my opinion, is representative of that period when the suffragette movement came to its greatest peak; to wit, about 1910, 1911, 1912, and 1913. Mrs. O'Day was standing on the curb in New York City observing the passing of a suffragette parade. As the parade passed by, her husband turned to her and said:

My dear, some day I hope to see you in a parade of this kind.

The tears sprung to her eyes, her heart was inspired, her soul was thrilled by the parade and the movement, but she wondered how her husband would react to the problem, and when he spoke to her about her joining the movement she felt indeed deeply moved and deeply grateful.

After that there was never a suffragette parade or a suffragette meeting or movement that was not led somewhat by Mrs. O'Day. She proceeded on from year to year until she became in the State of New York one of the great outstanding leaders of woman suffrage.

I shall never forget personally attending many meetings at which she presided, and at which she was the moving spirit. When I came to Congress in 1937 I discussed with her many times the very marvelous improvement that women had attained down through the years since, say 1920. It was in 1916 that the women obtained the right to vote in a national election first in California, and as we all rather vividly recollect, the women, having the right to vote in California, made possible the election of Woodrow Wilson as President in 1916.

Mrs. O'Day has passed to a great reward. She is one of the outstanding pioneers of that particular movement in womanhood and will unquestionably as history is written take a very high place

in the record of achievements in the movement. Today I believe she is laid away in her last resting place. My tribute in a poetic sense is one that I am reminded of because she not only loved it but it was loved by one of the great men of all times, Abraham Lincoln. Many times during those perilous days between 1860 and 1865 President Lincoln recited the 12 stanzas of this poem. No one knows who wrote it. Some believe it was written by Knox, while others attribute it to various authors; however, it has great potency and it possesses great philosophy.

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-flitting meteor, a fast flying cloud,

A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,

Be scattered around, and together be laid;
As the young and the old, the low and the high,

Shall crumble to dust and together shall lie.

The child that a mother attended and loved,
The mother that infant's affection who proved,

The husband that mother and infant who blessed—

Each, all, are away to their dwellings of rest.

The maid on whose brow, on whose cheek,
In whose eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure—her triumphs are by;

And alike from the minds of the living erased
Are the memories of mortals who loved her and praised.

The peasant, whose lot was to sow and to reap;

The herdsman, who climbed with his goats up the steep.

The beggar, who wandered in search of his bread—

Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

The saint who enjoyed the communion of heaven,

The sinner who dared to remain unforgiven,
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and just,

Have quietly mingled their bones in the dust.

So the multitude goes, like the flower or weed,

That withers away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,

To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same things our fathers have been;

We see the same sights our fathers have seen;

We drink the same stream, we feel the same sun,

And run the same course our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers did think;

From the death we are shrinking our fathers did shrink;

To the life we are clinging our fathers did cling,

But it speeds from us all like the bird on the wing.

They loved—but the story we cannot unfold;
They scorned—but the heart of the haughty is cold;

They grieved—but no wall from their slumbers will come;

They joyed—but the tongue of their gladness is dumb.

They died—ah! they died—we, things that are now,

That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,

And make in their dwellings a transient abode,

Meet the changes they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yea, hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,

Are mingled together in sunshine and rain:
And the smile and the tear, the song and the dirge,

Still follow each other like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye; 'tis the draught of a breath

From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,

From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud;

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

Mr. Speaker, upon this very sad occasion of memorializing the memory of one of our colleagues who did so much for the progress of humanity in her lifetime, I place upon her bier these few thoughts of one long dead. I trust that they may enshrine somewhat not only her memory and her accomplishments, but the love that we all bore her and now bear for her memory.

Mr. Speaker, in bidding her adieu, it is my prayer to God Almighty that on the other side, seated at His right hand, she will receive a deserved eternal reward.

HENRY B. BASS

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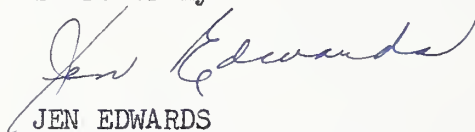
June 17, 1953

Dr. Louis A. Warren
Abraham Lincoln National Life Foundation
Fort Wayne, Indiana

Dear Dr. Warren:

Mr. Bass thought you might be interested in reading
the enclosed copy of his diary.

Yours truly

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jen Edwards", written over the typed name.

JEN EDWARDS
Secretary to Mr. Bass

/je

June 6: - Saturday - This morning I devoted to William Knox, an obscure Scottish poet of the border whose prediction to John Barleycorn blighted a promising career and brought him to an early grave. Born in 1789, he died in 1825 and was a contemporary of Sir Walter Scott and Samuel Coleridge. Both these literary lights saw much promise in the young man and did their best to aid him in overcoming his natural weakness, but to no avail.

I find William Knox is much better known in America than he is in Great Britain. Although I have had several bookshops in London and Edinburgh searching for books regarding him and his works. Only one anthology has been uncovered which contains the poem by which he is remembered. Yet scarcely a poetical anthology published in the states fails to include "Mortality", or better known by its first line, "O! Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud?".

Thirty years ago I ran across the poem and was so impressed by it I committed it to memory. Later I learned it was Abraham Lincoln's favorite poem. Still later I came into possession of a copy of the poem in the martyred President's own handwriting. This chain of events has caused me to become intensely interested in the Poet.

Last Fall I paid a visit to Abraham Lincoln Memorial University of Harrogate, Tennessee. There Dr. Gerald McMurtry permitted me to see and borrow a voluminous file regarding my poem. I had several copies made. The material in the file was gathered by Mr. Hambrecht of Wisconsin. The gentleman must have spent much time and considerable money in obtaining material and editing it. A copy of this file I brought with me to Scotland.

This morning I insisted Bertie accompany me at eight o'clock to the New Calton burying ground for in it I have learned William Knox is interred. This is only a block from the hotel. I wanted her to take a picture of me standing by his grave. The gates were unlocked and as we entered we chanced into a conversation with a passing gentleman. Promptly he became interested in our project and walked in with us.

The first thing to catch my eye was a very fine statue of Abraham Lincoln and a negro slave with uplifted arms lying prostrate at the Emancipator's feet. I had known a memorial to Lincoln was in Edinburgh and was most happy to photograph it with Bertie and our new friend standing beside it. The statue is dedicated to Scots who died aiding Lincoln in the fight for human freedom.

Then we began the search for William Knox. Bertie and the Scot finally left but I tramped the plot over in vain. If Knox is buried in that cemetery he remains well hidden. At length I gave up to journey again to the University. Here I had a most enjoyable visit with Dr. James C. Corson. I have learned he is the outstanding authority on Sir Walter Scott and intensive research on that subject has made him a leading historian regarding everything concerning the Scottish-English border. Because of much study of Scott he probably knows more of William Knox than any living person.

He was delighted at the file with which I presented him. After a casual glance he assured me there is probably more data about the poet in that memoranda than there is in the whole of Scotland. None of the books of Knox's poems and other writings are in the University Library but some of them are in the possession of the National Library of Scotland.

It was disappointing that the shortness of my visit and the habit ~~so~~ many institutions have of closing on Saturday prevented my meeting the Very Reverend John Baillie, Dean of the Faculty of Divinity, the Reverend Professor William Manson and Mr. Beattie, Librarian of the Scottish National Library. All of these gentlemen have aided in my search for details regarding William Knox.

Dr. Corson is very enthusiastic in his desire to aid me in every possible way. He is going to furnish me with photostatic copies of such correspondence as is available between Knox and Sir Walter Scott. Also a photograph of the memorial tablet in the church at Lillienleaf as well as of the farm house in which he was born.

I left the Library to visit with Dr. J. R. Peddie, head of the Carnegie Trust for Scottish Universities who have proven very helpful. He is one of the best informed gentlemen with whom I have ever had the privilege of visiting. Our conversation quickly turned from poets to World Affairs. He showed a good knowledge of such things. Particularly was I impressed with his view that the United States is so self sufficient she cannot accept goods from other countries in great quantity. He feels other countries must work out their economic problems without depending upon sale of the much of their products to the U. S.

The Trust which he heads was the first founded by Andrew Carnegie after he socked J. P. Morgan the sum of \$500,000,000 for his steel company at the time of the formation of the U. S. Steel Corporation in 1901. Dr. Peddie is much concerned about the investments of the Funds monies. At present all is invested in British Government bonds. I shudder to think what will happen to that if the Labor Party gets back into power for an extended sway, which could happen at anytime.

I paid a visit to James Things Bookstore. These people have been unable to locate anything about William Knox for me. I believe the personnel were as pleased as I when on an old book shelf I discovered a poetical anthology printed in 1857 containing five of Knox's poems.

Back in the hotel I found a call from a Mr. Forbes. I knew of no one by that name but upon calling his number discovered it to be our chance acquaintance of the morning. He had become interested in the whereabouts of Knox's burial and has enlisted the services of the city officials. They have promised to locate the grave and arrange for me to get a picture of the memorial stone. But Mr. Forbes said,

"My wife would certainly like to see the person who has come clear across the ocean to visit the grave of a man who has been dead for one hundred and thirty years."

The afternoon was passed by our party in inspecting Hollyrood and Edinburgh Castles. Hollyrood continues to be the residence of the Kings and Queen of Britain on visits to Edinburgh. It was Mary, Queen of Scots, favorite residence. Here her secretary and suspected lover were murdered at the instigation of her husband. This started Mary on her vendetta with Darnby which eventually cost her the throne and liberty.

The banquet hall is adorned with approximately one hundred kings of Scotland beginning with Fergus I, 330 B.C. and ending with Charles II in the late seventeenth century. Of course, nearly all of them are figments of the painters imagination but they seem to have satisfied Charles ego.

Stirling Castle, high on a hill, was the city's principal fortress in the ages Scots were almost continually at war. Apparently the Scots and Pitts originally came from Ireland but from wherever they came they certainly brought a bellicose nature. Through the ages Romans, Norsemen, Anglo-Saxons, Danes and Englishmen vainly endeavored to subdue them. When none of these foes were available for warfare the sturdy inhabitants of the hills and dales were wont to keep in trim by warring on each other.

If anyone would doubt the warlike characteristic of this hardy race they should study the memorial statues on the grounds of Stirling Castle. I believe Scots are my favorites among all the peoples I have encountered on this trip. But applying the term, peace-loving, to them represents the acme of pollyanna imagination.

While walking out of the entrance to Stirling Castle someone informed us Pinza had won the Derby. This called for ~~something~~ special so we went to the Cafe Royal, apparently Edinburgh's best restaurant for dinner. As if to aid our celebration in picking the winner we were served steaks, first we have seen in Britain.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Karen Jennings, Bob Berry, Bill Berry, Su-Su Jennings, Guy Berry, and Melissa Berry.

Merry Christmas



December 15, 1954

Dear Everybody:

"Let's talk about Christmas" was our son Bob's oft repeated admonition at the dinner table as the Yule Tide approached. His last Christmas on earth was passed in a fox-hole among the snow garbed evergreens of the Ardennes. The memory of that Christmas of 1944, when we knew our boy was caught in the fury of the Battle of the Bulge, serves to temper the frivolities of the season with more serious thoughts.

The time is at hand when again the Christian realm will commemorate the birth of the man who laid down the tenets by which it prays and lives and hopes. The brightness of the western world, as contrasted with the darkness behind the Iron Curtain, springs from the beacon of hope shining from the halo of He who died on the Cross. And when can be found a more fit hour to re-affirm our faith in a life hereafter, in the Golden Rule, and in our fellow men, than now as we commemorate the coming of He who brought light and gladness to the world.

"Do unto others, as thou would have others do unto thee" is the ideal rule under which humanity can attain the most from its brief journey through this life. It is the prime requisite for successful and harmonious relations with our fellows. Following that precept as best one can I have discovered to be the most certain approach to the peace of mind so essential to serenity and happiness.

I have an abiding faith in the people around me. I feel much as did Will Rogers

when he said, "I never met a man I didn't like." I carry the firm belief all men are honest and should be so regarded until they prove themselves differently. Because some occasionally disappoint us is not so much a result of intention as of the weakness which all mortals carry within themselves.

Practically everyone is honest so long as the going is easy. When things become difficult many follow the path of least resistance, and as Dale Carnegie states - "through weakness of character seeks to blame the other fellow for their own shortcomings." But until people prove themselves untrustworthy I believe in them, and few have failed me. The following letter just now received certainly reinforces my confidence in my fellow men.

"I worked for you a few years ago, and I kept some wrenches that did not belong to me when I left the company. Since then I have given my heart to God and I want to get this off my mind, and I am sending a check to pay for them. Please forgive me for doing such a thing. I was not raised that way by my father and mother."

From the time humanity was placed on this earth speculation regarding a life hereafter has been rife. Wise men and ignorant have unceasingly debated existence after death. Following the adoption of Marxism by the Russian Bolsheviks, with its crass materialism, increasing numbers of people have come to regard it

as the smart thing to doubt an eternal existence.

Occasionally Bertie is disturbed to hear friends or acquaintances decry the belief in a life eternal. She and I share a firm conviction that somewhere, somehow there is an after life. We cannot lead ourselves to believe people who have lived such fine lives as did our soldier son, and Bertie's and my parents, are separated from us forever. I tell her to let the agnostics have at their scoffing. They know exactly as much about the happenings after death as do we - which is absolutely nothing. Many centuries ago the Persian poet in speculating on the ageless subject reached that conclusion as he wrote:

"There was the door to which I found no key,

There was the veil through which I might not see---".

The precious children shown in this picture have not the slightest idea what is to befall them in this world or the next. I am occasionally chided regarding my dim view of the direction in which our government and form of society is trending. Because I have no faith in a Democracy, I am frequently labeled a pessimist. I am far from deserving that appellation. Actually, I envy these youngsters for their years that lie ahead.

My generation inherited the finest form of government ever designed by man. We could not keep it, but negligently have allowed it to slip into degenerating Democracy. To our successors is to be given the opportunity of lifting again the torch of human freedom which Washington kept flickering at Valley Forge and Lincoln rekindled with the blood of thousands on Civil War battlefields.

As I look over the fifty-seven years I have spent in this vale of tears with its trials and tribulations, its pleasures and ecstasies, more and more I come to believe with Ella Wheeler Wilcox:

"Whatever is - is best."

#####

Lucky, Lucky me! Last summer while in Edinburgh, Scotland, I searched what I thought was the New Calton Cemetery in search of the burial place of William Knox. While my wife and I were scanning

the headstones a Scot walked in the gate and inquired our mission. He helped us in our search, but after a couple of hours we gave up. We had looked at every headstone in the cemetery, and we could not find William Knox. Mr. Forbes, the helpful Scot, then told me he was going to the City Hall and discover where William Knox was buried. It seems every person buried in Edinburgh Cemeteries is registered at City Hall.

Several months later I received some pictures from him of William Knox's grave-stone. It seems we had stumbled into the Old Calton Cemetery instead of the New. The New was across the street, and in it Mr. Forbes had located William Knox's grave and had taken pictures of it. In the course of our correspondence I told him I would dearly love to get a copy of the book of William Knox's poems published over a century ago.

Recently I received a letter from him in which he said down on the border between Scotland and England he had located a copy of Knox's poems published in 1847, for which he had been compelled to pay 10/6 which is about \$1.50. The book has arrived and now I am the proud possessor of one of William Knox's books of poetry.

So far as I have been able to ascertain only three other copies of this book are extant. One is in the library of Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee; another at Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois, and the third is in possession of A. G. McKnight of Duluth, Minnesota.

My interest in William Knox and his poetry springs from the fact he is the author of "Oh! Why Should the Spirit of Mortal be Proud," The poem is universally acclaimed as having been the martyred Lincoln's favorite. I am the proud possessor of a copy of this poem in the President's own handwriting written over a century ago. A copy of the only edition of Knox's works to be published is certainly a splendid companion piece.

This poem is more than just one man's favorite. In a nation wide poll taken by the American Newspaper Alliance in 1929 it was rated among the top ten favorites of the American people.

#####

Another football season has faded into memory. It ended for me with my eyes glued to the television watching Maryland

Lincoln's Favorite Poem.

According to those who knew him most intimately, Mr. Lincoln was never again the same man after the death of Ann Rutledge, the "best beloved" of his early manhood. He had always been subject to attacks of mental depression, but after her death they became more frequent and alarming. It was about that time that he came across some verses in the "Poets' Corner" of a rural newspaper which made a strong impression on him. This was the poem beginning "Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" None who ever heard him repeat these wonderfully plaintive yet curiously empty lines in after life realized that they served to keep in his memory a grief which remained with perpetual insistence in his heart, to which he could not with becoming delicacy allude directly, but there is little doubt that Lincoln never recovered wholly from the loss of his youthful fiancée.

For many months after the passing of this beautiful young woman Lincoln was utterly disconsolate and made no secret of the fact. It was then that these ultra somber lines seemed to furnish him with a vehicle by means of which he might give expression to some of the sadness of soul which overshadowed him. In the words of one who knew him at the time: "He was heard to murmur them to himself as he slipped into the village at nightfall after an evening visit to the cemetery, and he would suddenly break out with them in little social assemblies after periods of silent gloom. They seemed to come unbidden to his lips."

That poem is now Lincoln's very own. The name of the obscure poet is lost to posterity, but his unpretentious work is associated imperishably with the memory of one of the world's greatest men and interwoven with the history of his supreme sorrow.

Kansas City Times, Feb. 12, 1957

THE KANSAS CITY TIMES, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1957.

THE POEM LINCOLN DIDN'T WRITE.

By John Edward Hicks.
THE favorite poem of Abraham Lincoln, written by an obscure young Scottish poet, has led to the collection of some 3,000 poems about the martyred President, the collector being Henry B. Bass, Enid, Okla., contractor.

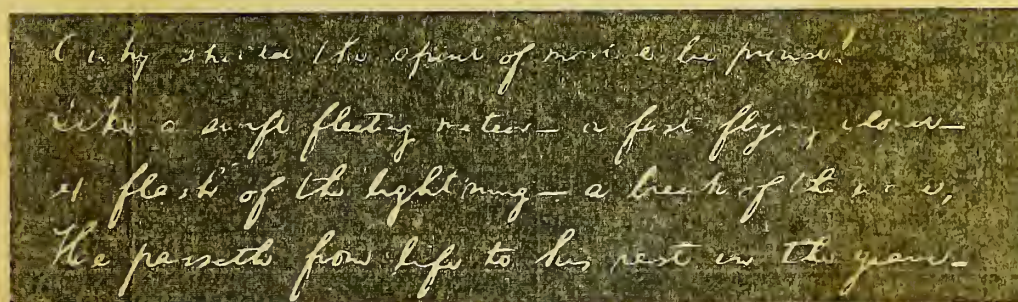
The poem is "Mortality," sometimes miscalled "Immortality," or "Why Should the

and given to Lincoln. The first of its 14 stanzas goes like this: Oh why should the spirit of mortal be proud? Like a swift fleeting meteor, a fast flying cloud, A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave— He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

It is frankly, according to the author himself, a paraphrasing of the scriptures, being based on Job III and Ecclesiastes I.

Lincoln memorized the poem and was fond of quoting it. Friends began attributing

some 40 miles south of Edinburgh, mixed farming and poetry, like Robert Burns. In 1820 the family moved to Edinburgh where Knox engaged in journalism, frequently contributing to the Literary Gazette. He visited the lake poets, Wordsworth, Southey and Coleridge, and was a guest of Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford. Some of his poems, including "Mortality," were published in 1824 in "Songs of Israel;" the rest of them



Lincoln's Favorite Poem in His Own Hand, as Shown on a Photostatic Copy of an Original for Which Henry B. Bass of Enid, Okla., Paid \$6,000.

Spirit of Mortal Be Proud?" A legend, firmly fixed, is that Lincoln himself was the author of the poem. Actually, it appeared in 1824 in "Songs of Israel" and again in 1847 in the collected works of William Knox, Edinburgh poet, said to have been of the same stock as John Knox, the great Scottish reformer.

Lincoln as a young man had access to the libraries of Judge John Pitcher and Judge John A. Brackenridge. While studying law there, he read the poetry of Milton, Goldsmith, Cowper, Pope, Gray, Shakespeare, Burns and Byron. It was said that when he went to Springfield he could "quote more poetry than any man in town."

The poem, "Mortality," had been printed anonymously in a newspaper, clipped by Dr. Jason Duncan of New Salem

it to Lincoln himself, so in 1846 he wrote:

"Beyond all question, I am not the author. I would give all I am worth to be able to write so fine a piece as I think that is. Neither do I know who is the author."

Lincoln copied the poem and gave it to a friend. It eventually came into the Barrett collection of Lincolniana. It was sold a few years ago at the Parke-Bernet auction in New York, the purchaser being Mr. Bass and the high bid \$6,000.

Even after becoming President, Lincoln continued his quest as to the identity of the poet. Finally the answer came from General James Grant Wilson, distinguished literary editor in Chicago, a friend of the President. He sent Mr. Lincoln a copy of Knox's collected poems.

William Knox, born in 1789

the following year in "The Harp of Zion."

On November 12, 1825, he suffered a paralytic stroke at Leith and died. He was buried in the "new" Calton cemetery, Edinburgh. Seventy years later a monument was erected to his memory by a grand-nephew.

The published volumes of Knox's poetry are exceedingly rare. Rare book dealers told Bass it would be impossible to find a copy at any price. In Scotland, Bass asked the help of a Scotsman. In course of time, the Scot wrote that he had found a copy and had sent it on.

"I hope I did not pay too much," he added. The price was \$1.50.

Bass attended the University of Missouri and played football on the varsity teams of 1916 and 1917.



Lincoln Lore

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FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

October, 1961

LINCOLN: POET OR RHYMESTER?

Was Lincoln a mere rhymester—a maker of poor verse? Lincoln experienced “feelings . . . which were certainly poetry” but in a letter to Andrew Johnston, a Quincy, Illinois lawyer, he questioned “whether (his) expression of those feelings is poetry.” Apparently Lincoln thought himself a failure as a poet. He read the poetry of others with appreciation and understanding (See Harkness & McMurtry’s book “Lincoln’s Favorite Poets,” University of Tennessee Press, 1959). Yet he always labored under the belief that the true poetic gift was beyond his reach.

While Lincoln’s vehicle of expression was not rhymed verse “there is a deep and abiding vein of pure poetry that runs all through his speeches.” Richard Hanser in an article entitled “Lincoln and Poetry” has written that “today scholars write of his speeches as ‘applied art’ and discuss the ‘subtle rhythms and cadences’ of his style. Of his most memorable lines it is now said that ‘they haunt the memory as much for their sound as their meaning.’”

Lincoln’s earliest poetic efforts found expression in the form of doggerel verse inscribed in his sum book:

“Abraham Lincoln his hand and pen
he will be good but god knows
When”

On the same page Lincoln wrote in a more serious vein:

“Time What an emty vaper tis
days how swift they are swift as
an indian (arr(ow) fly or like a
shooting star the present moment
Just (is here) then slides away in
(haste) that we (can) never say
they (’re ours) but (only say th(ey)
’re past”

Another page of Lincoln’s sum book carries this bit of doggerel:

“Abraham Lincoln is my name
And with my pen I wrote the same
I wrote in both hast and speed
and left it here for fools to read”

Legend has it that as a young man Lincoln wrote an epitaph for a Kickapoo Indian, named Johnny Kongapod. It has the ring of Lincoln’s literary style but there is no factual evidence available to prove that Lincoln is the author:

“Here lies poor Johnny Kongapod
Have mercy on him, gracious God

As he would do if he was God
And you were Johnny Kongapod”

Lincoln’s major effort is a twenty-five stanza poem titled after the first line of stanza one, “My childhood home I see again.” Lincoln evidently hastily jotted down a rough draft sometime in 1844 after visiting his old home in Indiana. The original manuscript, now owned by the Library of Congress, when compared with later published versions, reveals that Lincoln gave this poem a great deal of his time and attention. The May 29, 1939 edition of *Lincoln Lore*, number 529 entitled “Abraham Lincoln: Poet” provides the original text with the words in italics that were discarded and with footnotes indicating the words that were substituted. This study was made by Dr. Louis A. Warren, the former editor of *Lincoln Lore*. (See the illustrated cut in this bulletin).

The revised edition of twenty-four stanzas bears the supposed date of February 25, 1846. (See “The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln”. Volume 1, 1824-1848, Rutgers University Press, pages 367-370). The editors of “The Collected Works” state that they “have dated it the day following Lincoln’s letter to Andrew Johnston because in that letter Lincoln specifies that the poem is ‘almost done.’”

In a letter to Johnston, dated April 18, 1846 Lincoln explained the circumstances leading to the writing of the poem: “In the fall of 1844, thinking I might aid some to carry the State of Indiana for Mr. Clay, I went into the neighborhood in that State in which I was raised, where my mother and only sister were buried, and from which I had been absent about fifteen years. That part of the country is, within itself, as unpoetical as any spot of the earth; but still, seeing it and its objects and inhabitants aroused feelings in me which were certainly poetry; though whether my expression of those feelings is poetry is quite another question. When I got to writing, the change of subjects divided the thing into four little divisions or cantos, the first only of which I send you now and may send the others hereafter.”

The first canto which Lincoln sent Johnston consisted of ten stanzas, the first ten of the poem of the original

manuscript. The version sent Johnston was a revision of the original as is indicated by *Lincoln Lore* number 529.

On September 6, 1848 Lincoln again wrote to Johnston, “You remember when I wrote you from Tremont last spring, sending you a little canto of what I called poetry, I promised to bore you with another some time. I now fulfil the promise. The subject of the present one is an insane man. His name is Matthew Gentry. He is three older than I, and when we were boys we went to school together. He was rather a bright lad, and the son of the rich man of our very poor neighborhood. At the age of nineteen he unaccountably became furiously mad, from which condition he gradually settled down into harmless insanity. When, as I told you in my other letter I visited my old home in the fall of 1844, I found him still lingering in this wretched condition. In my poetizing mood I could not forget the impressions his case made upon me.”

This canto of thirteen stanzas is sometimes called “The Maniac.” It consists of the revised verses eleven to twenty-two of the original manuscript with stanza twenty-three deleted, and with the addition of the stanza:

“O death! Thou awe-inspiring
prince,
That keepest the world in fear;
Why dost thou tear more blest ones
hence,
And leave him ling’ring here?”

Lincoln closed his September 6, 1846 letter to Johnston with the statement: “If I should ever send another, the subject will be a ‘Bear hunt.’” This poem, dated September 6, 1846 by the editors of “The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln” consists of twenty-two stanzas. It appears from the two concluding stanzas of the original and uncorrected version of “My childhood home . . .” that the “Bear Hunt” was a part of the original composition. The next to the last stanza appears to mark the beginning of a third canto of a more pleasant topic.

Lincoln’s robust poem, the “Bear Hunt” has something “of the flavor of a wilderness folk tale.” While “My childhood home . . .” reveals a melancholy vein in Lincoln’s nature. The

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: POET

A manuscript in Abraham Lincoln's own hand which has recently been presented to the Library of Congress by Mary Lincoln Isham of Washington is of intense interest to Lincoln students, as it reveals how Lincoln's choice of words improved when he could give some time and attention to his written compositions.

Upon visiting his old home in Indiana in 1844 he was stirred to write some poetry which evidently he jotted down hastily. An occasion arose, however, for him to submit the poetry to a friend which caused him to go over the manuscript carefully, dividing the long poem into two cantos.

Copies of the two revised cantos have been published, but now for the first time the original and uncorrected manuscript is available. Four new stanzas of poetry which Lincoln failed to include in his revised writing are now presented, and it is also discovered that he wrote one new stanza, not appearing in the original, to conclude one of the cantos after the revision was made.

After reading the first draft of the part of the poem relating to the insane youth, Matthew Gentry, one is deeply impressed by Lincoln's reaction to the tragedy of his school companion.

It also appears from this manuscript as if his poem on "The Bear Hunt" was also a part of the original composition. The two concluding stanzas seem to be transition verses which anticipate the writing of a more pleasant theme—

"And now away to seek some scene
Less painful than the last."

Lincoln left unchanged the word joined—pronounced by him "joined" to rhyme with mind—indicating that as late as 1844 it was in good usage in his vocabulary at least.

The text as Lincoln first wrote it is herewith presented. The words which were discarded for more satisfactory ones are placed in italics and the substituted expressions are to be found in the footnotes.

My childhood home I see again And gladden with the view, And still as men's cries crowd my brain There's sadness in it too.	1 2 3 4	Poor Matthew, I have ne'er forgot When first with maddened will You're self you maimed, your father fought, Your mother strove to kill.	49 50 51 52
O Memory, thou mid-way world Twixt earth and paradise, Where things decayed and loved ones lost In dreamy shadows rise,	5 6 7 8	And terror spread and neighbors ran Your dangerous strength to bind, And soon a howling crazy man Your limbs were fast confined.	53 54 55 56
And freed from all that's gross or vile, Seems hallowed, pure and bright Like scenes in some enchanted vale All bathed in liquid light.	9 10 11 12	How then you writhed and shrieked aloud Your bones and sinews bared, And flendish on the gaping crowd With burning eye-balls glared,	57 58 59 60
As distant mountains please the eye When twilight chases day As brighter tones than, passing by, In distance die away;	13 14 15 16	And begged and swore and wept and prayed With maniac laughter joined; How painful are the pains displayed By pangs that kill the mind.	61 62 63 64
As leaving some grand waterfall We lingering list its roar So memory will hallow all We've known, but know no more	17 18 19 20	And when at length, the drear and long Time soothed your fiercer woes, How plaintively your mournful song Upon the still night rose.	65 66 67 68
Now twenty years have passed away Since here I bade farewell To woods, to field and scenes of play And schoolmates loved so well.	21 22 23 24	I've heard it oft as if I dreamed, Far distant, sweet and lone, The funeral dirge it ever seemed Of reason dead and gone.	69 70 71 72
Where many were how few remain Of old familiar things, But seeing these to mind again The lost and absent brings.	25 26 27 28	To drink its dregs I've stole away, All silently and still, Ere yet the rising God of Day Had streaked the eastern hill.	73 74 75 76
The friends I left that parting day, How changed, as time has sped; Young childhood gone, strong manhood gray, And half of all are dead.	29 30 31 32	Air held its breath and trees all still Seemed sorrowing angels round; Their swelling tears in dewdrops fell Upon the listening ground.	77 78 79 80
I hear the lone survivors tell How naught from death could save, Till every sound appears a knell, And every spot a grave.	33 34 35 36	But this is past and naught remains That raised you o'er the brute; Your maddened shrieks and soothing strains, Are like forever mute.	81 82 83 84
I range the fields with pensive tread, I pace the hollow rooms, And feel, companion of the dead, I'm living in their tombs.	37 38 39 40	Now fare thee well, more thou the cause Than subject now of woe; All mental pangs by time's kind hand Hast lost the power to know.	85 86 87 88
And here's an object more of dread Thou ought the grave contains, A human form with reason fled While wretched life remains.	41 42 43 44	And now away to seek some scene Less painful than the last With less of horror mingled in The present and the past.	89 90 91 92
Poor Matthew, once of genius bright, A fortune-favored child, Now looked for age in mental night, A hapless madman wild.	45 46 47 48	The very spot where green the bread That formed my bones I see, How strange old field on thee to tread And feel I'm part of thee.	93 94 95 96

1. childhood's	23. and fields	45. 46, 47, 48, 49, 50,	73. strains	89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, omitted from the
2. sudden	24. playmate	51, 52—omitted	74. stealthily	original text with the following new con-
3. memory crowds	25. but	57. strove	77. her—"trees with	cluding stanza substituted:
4. pleasure	27. them	59. glaring	the spell"	"O death! Thou awe-inspiring prince
5. earthly	31. grown	62. pronounced fined	78. whose	That kept the world in fear
11. like	33. loved	—did not change	82. thee	Why dost thou tear more blest ones hence
12. dusky	35. and	63. were these signs	83. piercing	And leave him lingering here."
15. bugle notes	40. the	65. the	87. laws	
21. near	41. but	66. thy		
22. bid	43. the	67. thy		

Lincoln Lore, Number 529. "Abraham Lincoln: Poet", May 29, 1939.

"Bear Hunt" gives an insight into a happy experience of his youth:

"A wild-bear chase, didst never see?
Then hast thou lived in vain.
Thy richest bump of glorious glee,
Lies desert in thy brain.

"When first my father settled here,
'Twas then the frontier line:
The panther's scream, filled night with fear
And bears preyed on the swine.

"But wo for Bruin's short lived fun,
When rose the squealing cry;
Now man and horse, with dog and gun,
For vengeance, at him fly.

"A sound of danger strikes his ear;
He gives the breeze a snuff:
Away he bounds, with little fear,
And seeks the tangled rough.

"On press his foes, and reach the ground,
Where's left his half munched meal;
The dogs, in circles, scent around,
And find his fresh made trail.

"With instant cry, away they dash,
And men as fast pursue;
O'er logs they leap, through water splash,
And shout the brisk halloo.

"Now to elude the eager pack,
Bear shuns the open ground;

Th(rough matted vines, he shapes his track
And runs it, round and round.

"The tall fleet cur, with deep-mouthed voice,
Now speeds him, as the wind;
While half-grown pup, and short-legged fice,
Are yelping far behind.

"And fresh recruits are dropping in
To join the merry corps:
With yelp and yell,—a mingled din—
The woods are in a roar.

"And round, and round the chase now goes,
The world's alive with fun;
Nick Carter's horse, his rider throws,
And more, Hill drops his gun.

"Now sorely pressed, bear glances back,
And lolls his tired tongue;
When as, to force him from his track,
An ambush on him sprung.

"Across the glade he sweeps for flight,
And fully is in view.
The dogs, new-fired, by the sight,
Their cry, and speed, renew.

"The foremost ones, now reach his rear,
He turns, they dash away;
And circling now, the wrathful bear,
They have him full at bay.

"At top of speed, the horse-men come,
All screaming in a row.
'Whoop! Take him Tiger. Seize him Drum.'
Bang,—bang—the rifles go.

"And furious now, the dogs he tears,
And crushes in his ire.
Wheels right and left, and upward rears,
With eyes of burning fire.

"But leaden death is at his heart,
Vain all the strength he plies.
And, spouting blood from every part,
He reels, and sinks, and dies.

"And now a dinsome clamor rose,
'Bout who should have his skin;
Who first draws blood, each hunter knows,
This prize must always win.

"But who did this, and how to trace
What's true from what's a lie,
Like lawyers, in a murder case
They stoutly *argufy*.

Aforesaid fice, of blustering mood,
Behind, and quite forgot,
Just now emerging from the wood,
Arrives upon the spot.

"With grinning teeth, and up-turned hair—
Brim full of spunk and wrath,
He growls, and seizes on dead bear,
And shakes for life and death.

"And swells as if his skin would tear,
And growls and shakes again;
And swears, as plain as dog can swear,
That he has won the skin.

"Conceited whelp! we laught at thee—
Nor mind, that not a few
Of pompous two-legged dogs there be,
Conceited quite as you."

The editors of "The Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln" Volume I, 1824-1848, page 392, in a note relative to Lincoln's letter (February 25, 1847) to Johnston state that, "In the Quincy *Whig* for May 5, 1847, Johnston published anonymously the first two cantos, giving them as a main title 'The Return' and as subtitles 'Part I—Reflection.' 'Part II—The Maniac.' Quotations from Lincoln's letter provided the 'prefatory remarks.' The third canto mentioned by Lincoln does not appear in the *Whig*. If, as may be supposed, the third canto consisted of 'The Bear Hunt' Johnston may well have concluded that it was unsuitable for printing as a companion piece to the other cantos." Johnston assented to Lincoln's stipulation that the "names be suppressed by all means. I have not sufficient hope of the verses attracting any favorable notice to tempt me to risk being ridiculed for having written them."

During the spring and summer of 1846 Lincoln gave a lot of thought to literary pursuits. There was published in the Quincy *Whig*, April 15, 1846 an article entitled "The Trailor Murder Case" with a sub-title "Remarkable Case of Arrest For Murder." While this narrative was published

*Gen. Lee's invasion of the
North, written by himself—*

*"In eighteen sixty three, with pomp,
and mighty swell,
The snow Jeff's Confederacy, went
forth to sack Phil-del.
The Yankees they got arter us, and
gin us partic'lar hell,
And we skidaddled back again,
and didn't sack Phil-del."*

*Written Sunday morning July 19. 1863.
Attest John Hay.*

This original document is a part of the John Hay Collection of the Brown University Library, Providence, Rhode Island.

anonymously, the identity of the author was known by Lincoln's associates. Ward H. Lamon's biography "The Life of Abraham Lincoln; From His Birth To His Inauguration as President" James R. Osgood and Company, 1872, pages 317-318, carries the statement that, "The circumstances (of the murder case) impressed him very deeply with the insufficiency and, danger of 'circumstantial evidence,' so much so, that he not only wrote the following account to Speed (June 19, 1841), but another more extended one, which was printed in a newspaper published at Quincy, Ill."

In regard to Lincoln's labors for art's sake the Lamon biography carries the following comment concerning Lincoln's literary treatment

of the Traylor murder case: "There is nothing constrained, and nothing studied or deliberate about it; but its simplicity, perspicuity, and artless grace make it a model of English composition." A further statement about Lincoln's prose, in connection with his treatment of the murder case was that, "He never says more nor less than he ought, and never makes use of a word that he could have changed for a better."

After publication in the Quincy Whig Lincoln's article was copied a week later by the Sangamo Journal. This contribution in prose undoubtedly resulted from the literary friendship between Lincoln and Johnston. The article is well written and would merit publication, even anonymously, in a

modern periodical. (See "The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln" Volume I, 1824-1848, pages 371-376).

In 1858 while Lincoln was the guest of a Winchester, Illinois hotel proprietor, he had occasion to write some verses in the autograph album of the two daughters of the innkeeper, Rosa and Linnie Haggard. These original verses, (the manuscripts are the property E. G. Miner of Rochester, New York) follow:

"To Rosa—
"You are young, and I am older;
You are hopeful, I am not—
Enjoy life, ere it grow colder—
Pluck the roses ere they rot.

"Teach your beau to heed the lay—
That sunshine soon is lost in shade—
That now's as good as any day—
To take thee, Rosa, ere she fade.

"Winchester, Sep. 28, 1858. A. Lincoln—"

The verse "To Linnie" written two days later on September 30, 1858 follows:

"To Linnie—
"A sweet plaintive song did I hear,
And I fancied that she was the singer—
May emotions as pure, as that song
set a-stir
Be the worst that the future shall
bring her.

"Winchester Sept. 30—1858—A. Lincoln—"

Lincoln is also known to have written, while a Springfield lawyer, some rather undignified lines incorporating spoonerisms—which are defined as a transposition of sounds, usually the initial sounds of two or more words. The dictionary gives an example: "A blushing crow for a crushing blow." The use of spoonerisms was a highly popular form of humor in frontier days. One such production in Lincoln's hand is owned by Nathaniel E. Stein, a former president of The Manuscript Society. Lincoln's "Short Short Story" appeared for the first time in facsimile in the Fall 1956 issue of Gentry Magazine.

As president of the United States Lincoln on occasion continued to compose doggerel verse. Two weeks after the battle of Gettysburg Lincoln wrote a humorous piece which was mentioned in John Hay's diary, under the date of July 19, 1863. The entry (deleted in part in Hay's three volume published diary) follows: "The Tycoon was in a very good humor. Early in the morning he scribbled this doggerel and gave it to me." This original verse in Lincoln's handwriting is now a part of the Brown University collection:

"Gen. Lee's invasion of the North written by himself.

"In eighteen sixty three, with pomp and mighty swell/Me and Jeff's Confederacy, went forth to sack Phil-del/The Yankees they got arter us, and gin us partic'lar hell/And we skidaddled back again, and didn't sack Phil-del."/

Below this verse Lincoln's private secretary appended the following in-

formation: "Written Sunday Morning July 19, 1863 Attest John Hay."

Apparently Lincoln liked to "mess around with words," to use the expression of a modern writer. In the more sophisticated poetry circles the statement has been made that "the end product of poetry is knowledge." Certainly this statement is true in regard to Abraham Lincoln's poetry. What better word picture do we have of Lincoln's Indiana boyhood than "My Childhood Home . . ." and the "Bear Hunt"? Even Lincoln's doggerel verse, spoonerisms and burlesque verse give us an insight into Lincoln's nature which might not have been revealed except in rhymed verse. Words are the most essential tools of knowledge and the Sixteenth President was a skilled craftsman, even though poetry was not his forte.

WILLIAM KNOX'S MONUMENT

Abraham Lincoln's favorite poem was "Mortality" by William Knox. The poem was published in a collection of works, the title page of which follows. "The/Lonely Hearth,/ The Songs of Israel,/Harp of Zion,/And/ Other Poems/By/ William Knox./ London:/John Johnstone, 26 Pater-noster Row,/ And 15 Prince Street, Edinburgh./1847."

This book of poems was presented to President Lincoln by General James Grant Wilson. For twenty years Lincoln had endeavored to identify the author and he was pleased to learn from General Wilson that his favorite poem was written by William Knox, a young Scottish poet who died in 1825. After his election to the presidency many newspaper reporters erroneously attributed the poem "Mortality" to Lincoln. The poem appears on pages 95 to 97 of the book. Lincoln's gift copy is not known to be extant. Only three copies of Knox's collected verse are known to exist in America. One copy is the property of Henry B. Bass of Enid, Oklahoma, and another copy is located at Lincoln Memorial University. A third copy belonged to the late M. L. Houser of Peoria, Illinois. He left this book to Bradley University from which library it seems to have disappeared.

William Knox, died of a paralytic stroke and was buried in the New Calton Cemetery in Edinburgh, Scotland. His was one of the early interments. His monument is an obelisk inscribed as follows: "Sacred to the memory of William Knox, eldest son of Thomas Knox and Barbara Turnbull of Firth, Roxburghshire, who died at Leith, 12th November, 1825, aged 36. Author of 'The Harp of Zion,' etc. (Quotation)."

On the same side of this four sided monument appears this inscription: "This monument was erected in loving admiration of the poet and his works by his grand-nephew Thomas Lang of Calcutta & Bombay, Nov. 1895." On another side of the obelisk is the statement that William Knox



This original photograph was presented to the Lincoln National Life Foundation by E. E. Whitney, Hingham, Massachusetts.

was "a branch of the stock of the great reformer John Knox." A third side of the monument bears the following inscription: "The poem entitled Mortality by Author Knox is engraved in letters of gold on the walls of the Imperial Palace St. Petersburg. It was also the favorite poem of Abraham Lincoln who repeated verses from it on the day of his assassination." Carved directly below the above mentioned inscription are the first and last stanzas of the twelve stanza poem:

"Oh! Why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift fleeting meteor, a fast flying cloud,
A flash of the lightening, a break in the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in the grave.

" 'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death;
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud;
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?"

REVIEW

MASTERPIECE: 'MORTALITY' (1824) BY WILLIAM KNOX

With Death on His Mind

BY JOHN J. MILLER

ON THE EVENING of March 25, 1864, Abraham Lincoln sent his young son Tad to fetch a copy of Shakespeare's plays from the White House library. With the volume in hand, the president recited passages to an audience of one: Francis Bicknell Carpenter, a painter who was working on "First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln," a portrait that now hangs in the Capitol.

After a while, Lincoln set down the book. "There is a poem that has been a great favorite with me for years," he said. Then he closed his eyes and declaimed 56 lines. He knew the words, but nothing else of the poem. "I would give a great deal," he said, "to know who wrote it, but I never could ascertain."

The author was William Knox and the title was "Mortality," though it was perhaps better known by its first line, "O why should the spirit of mortal be proud!" The theme is death, the great leveler that touches saints and sinners, kings and beggars, parents and children. Today, poet and poem would be almost entirely forgotten but for their connection to Lincoln.

Knox was born in Scotland in 1789. A descendant of John Knox, the 16th-century Protestant reformer, he showed a flair for verse at a young age but went into farming. He wasn't very good at it, possibly because he drank too much, and abandoned agriculture after five years. What he really wanted to do was write. His first collection of poems, "The Lonely Hearth," appeared in 1818. Two more followed: "The Songs of Israel," which includes "Mortality," in 1824 and "The Harp of Zion" in 1825.

The final book almost didn't see print. A publisher lost the manuscript, forcing Knox to spend several days re-writing its 65 poems in an impressive feat of recall. A few months later, Knox suffered a stroke and died at the age of 36. Sir Walter Scott eulogized him as "a young poet of considerable talent." Robert Southey, England's poet laureate at the time, also admired Knox.

Yet it was a former backwoodsman from the U.S. who kept Knox's words alive, helping the poet become a literary

one-hit wonder. In 1831, a friend handed the then 22-year-old Lincoln a copy of "Mortality," untitled and anonymous, probably clipped from a newspaper. Lincoln had good taste in poetry, reading and memorizing works by Robert Burns and Lord Byron as well as Shakespeare. The obscure "Mortality," however, became the poem he liked best. "I would give all I am worth and go into debt to be able to write so fine a piece as I think that is," he wrote in 1846.

"Mortality" contains 14 four-line stanzas of anapestic tetrameter, meaning that it advances in four beats of three syllables, two unstressed and one stressed. Like much of Knox's work, its inspiration comes from the Bible, in this case the Books of Job and Ecclesiastes. The latter observes that there is nothing new under the sun, which Knox refashions: "For we are the same things that our fathers have been / We see the same sights that our fathers have seen / We

drink the same stream, we feel the same sun / And we run the same course that our fathers have run."

The point of the poem is that death awaits all, regardless of station: "And the young and the old, and the low and the high / Shall moulder to dust, and together shall lie." Lincoln saw much of death. His mother died when he was a boy, his sister when he was a teenager, and Ann Rutledge, the love of his life before he met Mary Todd, when he was in his 20s. Two of his four sons died before him, and during the Civil War thousands of soldiers consecrated the grounds of Gettysburg and other battlefields.

Many Lincoln scholars have scoffed at "Mortality." David Herbert Donald dismissed it as "a tedious dirge." Ferenc Morton Szasz, who has written on

Lincoln's appreciation of Burns, called it "mediocre." Yet Lizzie MacGregor of the Scottish Poetry Library praises the poem's "simple vocabulary and easy rhythm," which made it "easier for the man on the street to absorb." Douglas L. Wilson, a Lincoln scholar, has written that it "served as an emotional tonic for a man subject to recurrent and virtually disabling melancholy." In time, its appeal may have deepened for the Great Emancipator. Death makes men equal: The low and the high included the black

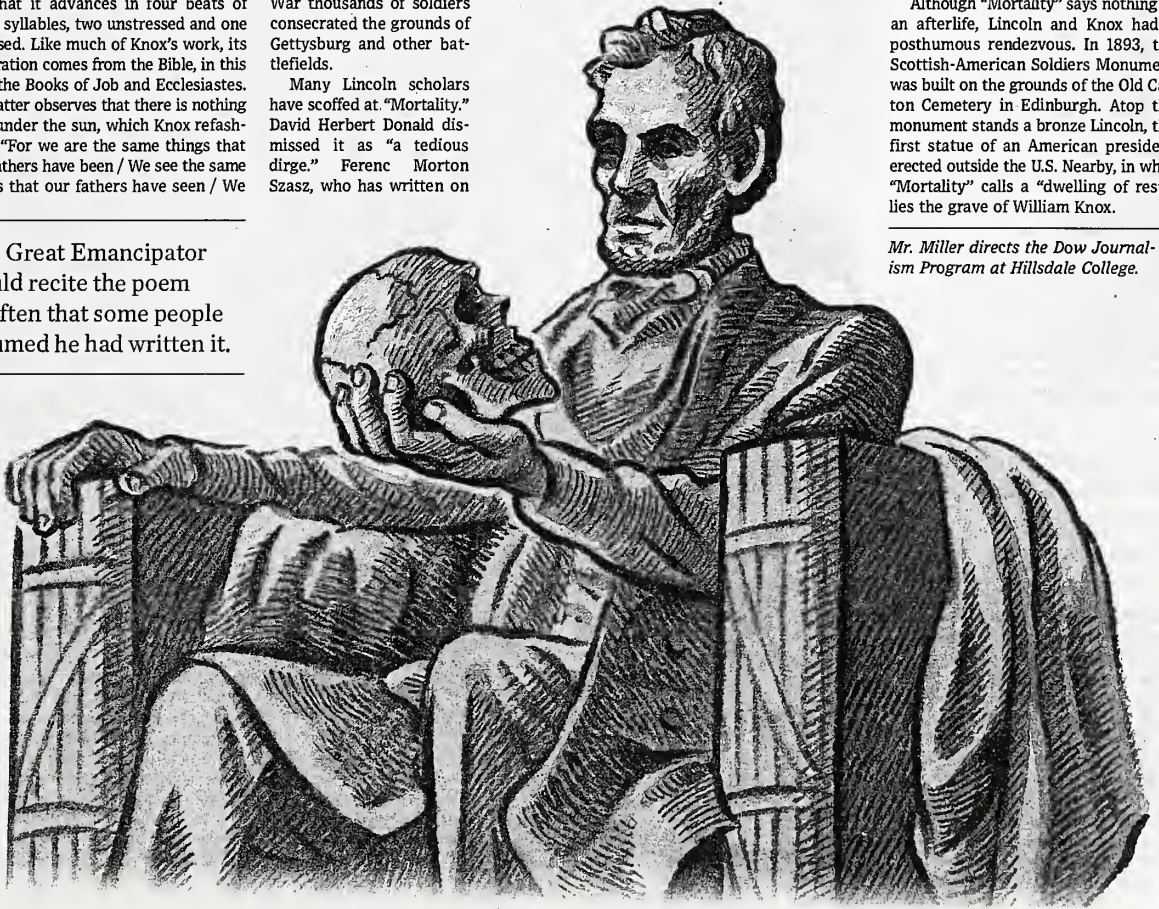
and the white.

Lincoln recited the poem so much that some people assumed he had written it. The president always corrected the mistake. One listener eventually recognized the lines. Gen. James Grant Wilson knew "Mortality" and sent a copy of Knox's collected works to Lincoln. What Lincoln thought of the Knox corpus, or if he even read it, is not known. One story, perhaps erroneous, claims that Lincoln performed "Mortality" a final time on April 15, 1865, just hours before his assassination.

Although "Mortality" says nothing of an afterlife, Lincoln and Knox had a posthumous rendezvous. In 1893, the Scottish-American Soldiers Monument was built on the grounds of the Old Calton Cemetery in Edinburgh. Atop the monument stands a bronze Lincoln, the first statue of an American president erected outside the U.S. Nearby, in what "Mortality" calls a "dwelling of rest," lies the grave of William Knox.

Mr. Miller directs the Dow Journalism Program at Hillsdale College.

The Great Emancipator would recite the poem so often that some people assumed he had written it.



David Gohard

(Sponsored by Anxious Christians)

a GREAT favorite with me for
years, which was first shown to

me when a young man by a friend, and which I afterward saw and cut from a newspaper and learned by heart. I would," he continued, "give a great deal to know who wrote it, but have never been able to ascertain."—William Cullen Bryant in his "Library of Poetry and Song.")

O, WHY should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
Man passes from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around and together be laid;
And the young and the old, and the low and the high,
Shall moulder to dust and together shall lie.

The maid on whose cheek, on whose brow, in whose eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure—her triumphs are by;
And the memory of those who loved her and praised,
Are alike from the minds of the living erased.

The hand of the king that the sceptre hath borne,
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn;
The eye of the sage and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depth of the grave.

**'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud—
O, WHY should the spirit of mortal be proud?**

—WILLIAM KNOX.

All truly great men are thoughtful and pensive. They have had the wisdom to see that what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithall shall we be clothed, are only incidental questions. They have seen that the really great questions are, Where did I come from? Where am I going?

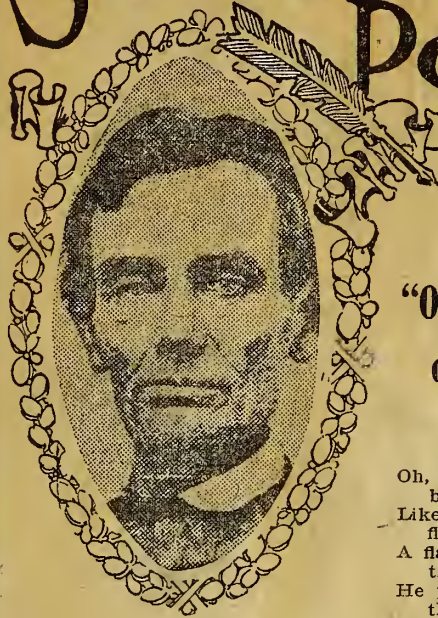
Lincoln was fortunate in having a mother and stepmother who taught him the Bible. No wonder he said, "All that I am, I owe to my angel mother!" God pity the children, and nation, of our dancing, smoking, drinking, cursing, filth-talking, adulterous mothers and fathers today.

Well—what are YOU doing to better conditions with YOUR OWN

family and friends? If we and our children and friends would read and teach the Scriptures, and "learn by heart" this solemn poem, as Lincoln did, they might help take away our pride and make us useful, too, in a tempest-tossed world, as they did Lincoln. We must do something quickly to help counteract the blighting influence of irreverent, silly, nasty, murderous radio programs and motion pictures, seeing our doped operators and censors don't care.

NOTE—We will send you **FREE** this full poem and references to 1,000 Choice Scriptures.—D. A. Sommer, Box 5838, Indianapolis 8, Ind.—Adv.

Stories of Famous Poems



No. 15

"Oh, Why Should the Spirit of Mortal Be Proud?"

—BY WILLIAM KNOX.

Oh, why should the spirit of mortal
be proud?
Like a fast-flitting meteor, a fast-
flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of
the wave,
He passeth from life to his rest in
the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scatter'd around and together be laid;
And the young and the old, and the low and the high
Shall moelder to dust and together shall lie.

The child that a mother attended and loved,
The mother that infant affection who proved,
The husband that mother and infant who bless'd—
Each, all, are away to their dwellings of rest.

The maid on whose cheek, on whose brow, in whose eye
Shone beauty and pleasure—her triumphs are by;
And the memory of those who have loved her and praised
Are alike from the minds of the living erased.

The hand of the king that the scepter hath borne,
The brow of the priest that the miter hath worn,
The eye of the sage and the heart of the brave
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.

The peasant whose lot was to sow and to reap,
The herdsman who climb'd with his goats to the steep,
The beggar who wander'd in search of his bread
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

The saint who enjoy'd the communion of heaven,
The sinner who dared to remain unforgiven,
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and just
Have quietly mingled their bones in the dust.

So the multitude goes, like the flower and the weed,
That wither away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that hath often been told.

For we are the same things our fathers have been;
We see the same sights that our fathers have seen,—
We drink the same stream, and we feel the same sun,
And run the same course that our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers would think;
From the death we are shrinking from, they, too, would shrink;
To the life we are clinging to, they too would cling;
But it speeds from the earth like a bird on the wing.

They loved, but their story we cannot unfold;
They scorn'd, but the heart of the haughty is cold;
They grieved, but no wall from their slumbers will come;
They joy'd, but the voice of their gladness is dumb.

They died,—ay! they died; and we things that are now,
Who walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
Who make it their dwellings a transient abode,
Meet the changes they met on their pilgrimage road.

Yea, hope and despondence, and pleasure and pain,
Are mingled together in sunshine and rain;
And the smile and the tear, the song and the dirge,
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

'Tis the twink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud,—
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

To-day is the 102d birthday of Abraham Lincoln, and it is, therefore, quite appropriate to print the poem that most stirred the soul of this great man of the past century, "Mortality," or better known by its first line, "Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?" This poem was given to Lincoln when he was a young man by Dr. Duncan, of New Salem, who discovered it in an almanac with no author's name attached. Of Lincoln it was once said that the prevailing sentiment of his powerful, yet sad, countenance was expressed in this first line.

One evening in December of 1863, when the Civil War between the States was at its height, Mr. Lincoln repeated the verses to Colonel J. G. Wilson, who was in Washington at the time.

"Mr. President," remarked the guest, "you have omitted a portion of it."

"What! is there more of it?" exclaimed Mr. Lincoln, with eager astonishment.

"Yes, sir; two more stanzas."

Colonel Wilson repeated them to the delight of the President.

"Can you tell me who wrote the poem?" Mr. Lincoln inquired. "I can't find out. Some of the newspapers have attributed the authorship to me."

"It was written," Colonel Wilson replied, "by William Knox, a Scottish poet of considerable talent, who died in Edinburgh in 1825. He published several volumes of poems, and was well known to Sir Walter Scott, 'Christopher North,' of glorious memory, and to many others among the literary leaders of his day."

The following incident, which occurred earlier than the above story, showing the great respect Mr. Lincoln had for the Knox poem, is related by Mr. F. B. Carpenter, the artist:—

"I was with Mr. Lincoln alone one evening in his room, during the time I was painting my large picture of the President at the White House. He presently threw aside his pen and paper and began talking to me of Shakespeare. He sent little 'Tad,' his son, to the library to bring a copy of the plays, and then read to me several of his favorite passages, showing genuine appreciation of the great poet. Relapsing into a sadder strain, he laid the book aside, and, leaning back in his chair, said:—

"There is a poem that has been a great favorite with me for years. It was first shown to me by a friend when I was a young man. I afterwards learned it by heart. 'I would,' he continued, 'give a great deal to know who wrote it, but, I have never been able to ascertain.'"

"Then, half closing his eyes, he repeated to me the lines. Greatly pleased and interested, I told him I would like, if ever an opportunity occurred, to write them down from

his lips. He said he would sometime try to give them to me. A few days afterward he asked me to accompany him to the temporary studio of Mr. Swayne, the sculptor, who was making a bust of his at the Treasury Department. While he was sitting for the bust I was suddenly reminded of the poem, and said to him that then would be a good time to dictate it to me. He complied, and sitting upon some books at his feet, as nearly as I can remember, I wrote the lines down, one by one, from his lips."

It is a singular coincidence that the only statue of Lincoln in Europe is erected in Edinburgh, Scotland, the home of the poet, Knox. Its inception and completion was due to the happy thought and untiring zeal of Wallace Bruce, of Yale College, Class of 1867, during his consulship in the Capital City of the home of his ancestors. This monument was unveiled by Mr. Bruce in August, 1892, and was made possible by the generosity of American citizens representing many States in the Union, and was nobly executed by George E. Bissell, one of the best known of American sculptors. Engraved upon the granite base of the memorial is Lincoln's immortal sentence: "To preserve the Jewel of Liberty in the framework of Freedom."

It is noted by one of Lincoln's biographers, that the poem was handed to him at a time just following the death of Ann Rutledge, to whom Lincoln was engaged to be married, and as he was completely prostrated and unnerved, the reading of the verses brought him great consolation.

O. W. Holmes' poem "The Last Leaf," was a second favorite with Lincoln, and his favorite hymns were Toplady's "Rock of Ages," and one beginning:—

"Father, whate'er of earthy bliss,
Thy sovereign denies."

Knox was a Scottish poet, and was born at Firth, parish of Lilliesleaf, Roxburghshire, August 17, 1789. After receiving elementary education, he farmed without success near Langholm, Dumfriesshire, from 1812 to 1817.

"He became too soon his own master," says Scott, "and plunged into dissipation and ruin. His farming career over, he returned to his native place. In 1820 the family settled in Edinburgh, and Knox became a journalist." Sir Walter Scott, Prof. Wilson and others befriended him, and Scott frequently gave him substantial pecuniary relief. His convivial habits undermined his health, and he died at Edinburgh of paralysis, November 12, 1825.

Besides a prose work "Visit to Dublin" and a Christmas tale, "Marianne, or the Widower's Daughter," Knox published "The Lonely Hearth," and other poems, 1818; "The Songs of Israel," 1824; and "The Harp of Zion," 1825.

THE POEM THAT LINCOLN LOVED.

The Verses Beginning "Oh! Why Should the Spirit of Mortal Be Proud?" Etc.

"There is a poem," said Lincoln, "which has been a great favorite with me for years, which was first shown me when a young man by a friend, and which I afterwards saw and cut from a newspaper and learned by heart. I would give a good deal to know who wrote it, but I never have been able to ascertain."

Then, half closing his eyes, he repeated the verses:

Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift fitting meteor, a fast flying cloud,
The flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
He passes from life to his rest in the grave.

The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around and together he laid;
And the young and the old and the low and the high
Shall molder to dust and together shall lie.

The infant a mother attended and loved,
The mother that infant's affection who proved,
The husband that mother and infant who hlest,
Each, all are away to their dwellings of rest.

The maid on whose cheek, on whose brow, in
whose eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure, her triumphs are by;
And the mem'ry of those who loved her and
praised
Are alike from the minds of the living erased.

The hand of the king that the scepter hath borne,
The brow of the priest that the miter hath worn,
The eye of the sage and the heart of the brave
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.

The peasant whose lot was to sow and to reap,
The herdsman who climbed with his goats up the
steep,
The beggar who wandered in search of his bread,
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.

The saint who enjoyed the communion of heaven,
The sinner who dared to remain unforgiven,
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and just,
Have quietly mingled their bones in the dust.

So the multitude goes like the flower or the weed
That withers away to let others succeed;
So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.

For we are the same that our fathers have been;
We see the same sights our fathers have seen;
We drink the same streams, and view the same
sun,
And run the same course our fathers have run.

The thoughts we are thinking our fathers would
think,
From the death we are shrinking our fathers would
shrink;
To the life we are clinging they also would cling,
But it speeds from us all like a bird on the wing.

They loved, hut the story we cannot unfold;
They scorned, hut the heart of the haughty is cold;
They grieved, but no wail from their slumber will
come;
They joyed, hut the tongue of their gladness is
dumb.

They died, ay, they died. We things that are now,
That walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
And make in their dwellings a transient abode,
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage
road.

Yea, hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
Are mingled together in sunshine and rain;
And the smile and the tear, the song and the
dirge,
Still follow each other like surge upon surge.

'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a
breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of
death,
From the gilded salon to the hier and the shroud—
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

In "Household Book of Poetry," containing selections by Charles A. Dana, William Knox is given as the author

Lincoln's Favorite Poem

One of Abraham Lincoln's favorite poems was "Mortality," written by the Scottish poet, William Knox. Lincoln often recited it to his friends.

(see other side)

A LINK WITH ABRAHAM LINCOLN.



The memorial in the New Calton Cemetery, Edinburgh, over the remains of William Knox, the author of "Mortality," Abraham Lincoln's favourite poem.

A CALTON MEMORIAL.

Abraham Lincoln's Favourite Poem.

Everybody knows Abraham Lincoln's favourite poem "Mortality." It is said that on the day of his assassination—that never-to-be-forgotten day in American history—he repeated stanza after stanza of this striking elegy. One can almost imagine one can hear his voice, as with perturbed brow and nervous footsteps, he paced up and down his room. The war was over, yes, but a strange foreboding seemed to have taken possession of him.

The hand of the King that the sceptre hath borne,
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn,
The eye of the sage, and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depths of the grave.
The saint that enjoyed the communion of Heaven,
The sinner that dared to remain unforgiven,
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and just,
Have quietly mingled their bones in the dust.
'Tis the twink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud,
O, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

Born on the Borders.

This poem—there are 14 stanzas in all, it is unnecessary to remind the reader—has for years been a favourite with countless numbers of lesser mortals. Nor is it only in the English-speaking world that it is admired. In the Imperial Palace at Leninograd, where the footsteps of the Romanoffs now no longer echo, the verses are inscribed on one of the walls in letters of gold.

But what of the man who wrote them? Even among those who have the words by heart, how many could outline William Knox's story, let alone detail it. The poet was born at Firth, a small estate in the parish of Lilliesleaf in the county of Roxburgh, on 17th August, 1789. His father, Thomas Knox, was a well-known agriculturist, his mother being Barbara, eldest daughter of a Scottish laird, Walter Turnbull by name. He attended school first at Lilliesleaf, and later at Musselburgh, the latter indissolubly associated with the name of "Delta." After a brief apprenticeship in a writer's office Knox was called home to assist his father in the management of his farms. In 1812 the poet struck out for himself, the farm he leased being that of Wrae, near Langholm. Here lack of capital appears to have hampered his activities.

A Friend of Sir Walter.

In 1817 the poet quit Wrae for good, his departure sincerely regretted by a band of devoted well-wishers, but before doing so he had composed the greater part of the volume subsequently printed as "The Lonely Hearth and Other Poems." In 1820 Knox took up residence in the Scottish capital, the city which has provided a roof at one time or other for so many noted authors. Here for the next few years his pen was indefatigable. Not only did the poet become a frequent contributor to the "Literary Gazette," but among other things he wrote a Christmas

romance. Little more than two years after settling in the shadow of Arthur's Seat, Knox paid a visit to Ireland, where for about a twelvemonth he lived with his brother Walter. It was while resident in Ireland that he wrote his "Songs of Israel." His next volume—his last as it was to prove—was the "Harp of Zion," a collection which contains some of the finest poems he ever wrote. The subject of the present remarks, it is pleasing to know, enjoyed the friendship of several of the leading authors of the day, while with others he was on corresponding terms. Scott and Christopher North both knew him, while among his correspondents was Southey.

Southey's Concern.

The first regarded his talents as of a high order, and Southey, to whom the younger man had evidently poured out his heart, could hardly have answered him in terms of greater kindness. "Deprivation such as you speak of," wrote the Laureate, "are our portion here. I hope what has fallen to my lot have had their natural and proper effect in loosening the ties that bind us to this world. That effect affliction has produced on you also; and I cannot but wish that talents and feelings such as yours were employed in the ministry of the Gospel, where you could find your happiness in the performance of your duty,—you are young enough to think of this. Farewell dear Sir, and believe me yours with sincerest respect, Robert Southey."

Our poet belongs to that mournful band of minstrels snatched away by death before their artistry was fully matured—Chatterton, Keats, Byron, Shelley, Kirk White, Adam Lindsay Gordon. He died in Leith in November, 1825, in the 37th year of his age, and was buried in the New Calton Cemetery, Edinburgh. Only a short distance away stands the monument of Burns, but even within the walls of the graveyard he is not without appropriate companionship. Close at hand lies Dr John Brown, author of "Rab and his Friends," while not 20 feet distant is the vault in which R. L. Stevenson's father and mother take their rest.

Branch of John Knox Stock.

The memorial over the poet's grave, as the inscription informs us, was erected in November, 1895, by one of his grand-nephews, Thomas Lang, of Calcutta and Bombay. The remaining sides of the memorial, like that already quoted, are liberally inscribed. On one are carved in full two complete stanzas of the poem Lincoln so admired, the first and the last. On another side the lettering runs as follows: "A branch of the stock of the great reformer John Knox." Room has also been found on the memorial for yet another verse:

The lips that could warble
A soul-moving strain,
Are breathless and mute
As a timbrel unstrung,
And the hand of the minstrel
Can wake not again
The music that sleeps where
The grave flowers have sprung.

Knox's last resting-place is in a somewhat out-of-the-way part of the Capital; but it is not forgotten. By a singular coincidence in the Old Calton Cemetery (less than half a mile away) stands an impressive monument to the assassinated President himself, this memorial marking the last resting-place (as it is understood) of a number of Scottish soldiers who served in the American Civil War.

H. M. Forbes.



